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"Granny's come to our house"

See poem, "Granny," Vol. IV.

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The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley

ECCENTRIC MR. CLARK

ALL who knew Mr. Clark intimately, casually, or by sight alone, smiled always, meeting him, and thought, "What an odd man he is!" Not that there was anything extremely or ridiculously obtrusive in Mr. Clark's peculiarities either of feature, dress, or deportment, by which a graded estimate of his really quaint character might aptly be given; but rather, perhaps, it was the curious combination of all these things that had gained for Mr. Clark the transient celebrity of being a very eccentric man.

And Mr. Clark, of all the odd inhabitants of the busy metropolis in which he lived, seemed least conscious of the fact of his local prominence. True it was that when familiarly addressed as "Clark, old boy," by sportive individuals he never recollected having seen before, he would oftentimes stare blankly in return, and with evident embarrassment; but as these actions may have been attributable to weak eyes, or to the confusion consequent upon being publicly recognized by the quondam associates of bacchanalian hours, the suggestive facts only served to throw his eccentricities in new relief.

And in the minds of many, that Mr. Clark was

somewhat given to dissipation, there was but little doubt; for, although in no way, and at no time, derelict in the rigid duties imposed upon him as an accountant in a wholesale liquor house on South John Street, a grand majority of friends had long ago conceded that a certain puffiness of flesh and a soiled-like pallor of complexion were in nowise the legitimate result of over-application simply in the counting-room of the establishment in which he found employment; but as to the complicity of Mr. Clark's direct associates in this belief, it is only justice to the gentleman to state that by them he was held above all such suspicion, from the gray-haired senior of the firm, down to the pink-nosed porter of the warerooms, who, upon every available occasion, would point out the eccentric Mr. Clark as "the on'y man in the biznez 'at never sunk a 'thief' er drunk a drop o' 'goods' o' any kind, under no consideration!"

And Mr. Clark himself, when playfully approached on the subject, would quietly assert that never, under any circumstances, had the taste of intoxicating liquors passed his lips, though at such asseverations it was a noticeable fact that Mr. Clark's complexion invariably grew more sultry than its wont, and that his eyes, forever moist, grew dewier, and that his lips and tongue would seem covertly entering upon some lush conspiracy, which in its incipiency he would be forced to smother with his hastily drawn handkerchief. Then the eccentric Mr. Clark would laugh nervously, and pouncing

on some subject so vividly unlike the one just preceding it as to daze the listener, he would ripple ahead with a tide of eloquence that positively overflowed and washed away all remembrance of the opening topic.

In point of age Mr. Clark might have been thirty, thirty-five, or even forty years, were one to venture an opinion solely by outward appearance and under certain circumstances and surroundings. As, for example, when a dozen years ago the writer of this sketch rode twenty miles in a freight-caboose with Mr. Clark as the only other passenger, he seemed in age at first not less than thirty-five; but on opening a conversation with him, in which he joined with wonderful vivacity, a nearer view, and a prolonged and studious one as well, revealed the rather curious fact that, at the very limit of all allowable supposition, his age could not possibly have exceeded twenty-five.

What it was in the man that struck me as eccentric at that time I have never been wholly able to define, but I recall accurately the most trivial occurrences of our meeting and the very subject-matter of our conversation. I even remember the very words in which he declined a drink from my traveling-flask—for "It's a raw day," I said, by way of gratuitous excuse for offering it. "Yes," he said, smilingly motioning the temptation aside; "it is a raw day; but you're rather young in years to be doctoring the weather—at least you'd better change the treatment—they'll all be raw days

for you after a while!" I confess that I even felt an inward pity for the man as I laughingly drained his health and returned the flask to my valise. But when I asked him, ten minutes later, the nature of the business in which he was engaged, and he handed me, in response and without comment, the card of a wholesale liquor house, with his own name in crimson letters struck diagonally across the surface, I winked naively to myself and thought "Ah-ha!" And as if reading my very musings, he said: "Why, certainly, I carry a full line of samples; but, my dear young friend, don't imagine for a minute that I refuse your brand on that account. You can rest assured that I have nothing better in my cases. Whisky is whisky wherever it is found, and there is no 'best' whisky—not in all the world!"

Truly, I thought, this is an odd source for the emanation of temperance sentiments—then said aloud: "And yet you engage in a business you dislike! Traffic in an article that you yourself condemn! Do I understand you?"

"Might there not be such a thing," he said quietly, "as inheriting a business—the same as inheriting an appetite? However, one advances by gradations: I shall *sell* no more. This is my last trip on the road in that capacity: I am coming in now to take charge of the firm's books. Would be glad to have you call on me any time you're in the city. Good-by." And, as he swung off the slowly moving train, now entering the city, and I stood

watching him from the open door of the caboose as he rapidly walked down a suburban street, I was positive his gait was anything but steady—that the step—the figure—the whole air of the man was that of one then laboring under the effects of partial intoxication.

I have always liked peculiar people; no matter where I met them, no matter who they were; if once impressed with an eccentricity of character which I have reason to believe purely unaffected, I never quite forget the person, name or place of our first meeting, or where the interesting party may be found again. And so it was in the customary order of things that, during hasty visits to the city, I often called on the eccentric Mr. Clark, and, as he had promised on our first acquaintance, he seemed always glad to see and welcome me in his new office. The more I knew of him the more I liked him, but I think I never fully understood him. No one seemed to know him quite so well as that.

Once I had a little private talk regarding him with the senior partner of the firm for which he worked. Mr. Clark, just prior to my call, had gone to lunch—would be back in half an hour. Would I wait there in the office until his return? Certainly. And the chatty senior entertained me:—Queer fellow—Mr. Clark!—as his father was before him. Used to be a member of the firm—his father; in fact, founded the business—made a fortune at it—failed, for an unfortunate reason, and went "up the flume." Paid every dollar that he owed, however. sacrificing the

very home that sheltered his wife and children—but never rallied. He had quite a family, then? Oh, yes; had a family—not a large one, but a bright one—only they all seemed more or less unfortunate. The father was unfortunate—very; and died so, leaving his wife and two boys—the older son much like the father—splendid business capacities, but lacked will—couldn't resist some things—even weaker than the father in that regard, and died at half his age.

But the younger brother—our Mr. Clark—remained, and he was sterling—"straight goods" in all respects. Lived with his mother—was her sole support. A proud woman, Mrs. Clark—a proud woman, with a broken spirit—withdrawn entirely from the world, and had been so for years and years. The Clarks, as had been mentioned, were all peculiar—even the younger Mr. Clark, our friend, I had doubtless noticed was an odd genius, but he had stamina—something solid about him, for all his eccentricities—could be relied on. Had been with the house there since a boy of twelve—took him for the father's sake; had never missed a day's time in any line of work that ever had been given in his charge—was weakly-looking, too. Had worked his way from the cellar up—from the least pay to the highest—had saved enough to buy and pay for a comfortable house for his mother and himself, and, still a lad, maintained the expense of companion, attendant and maid servant for the mother. Yet, with all this burden on his shoul-

ders, the boy had worried through some way, with a jolly smile and a good word for every one. "A boy, sir," the enthusiastic senior concluded—"a boy, sir, that never was a boy, and never had a taste of genuine boyhood in his life—no more than he ever took a taste of whisky, and you couldn't get that in him with a funnel!"

At this juncture Mr. Clark himself appeared, and in a particularly happy frame of mind. For an hour the delighted senior and myself sat laughing at the fellow's quaint conceits and witty sayings, the conversation at last breaking up with an abrupt proposition from Mr. Clark that I remain in the city overnight and accompany him to the theater, an invitation I rather eagerly accepted. Mr. Clark, thanking me, and pivoting himself around on his high stool, with a mechanical "Good afternoon!" was at once submerged in his books, while the senior, following me out and stepping into a carriage that stood waiting for him at the curb, waved me adieu, and was driven away. I turned my steps up the street, but remembering that my friend had fixed no place to meet me in the evening, I stepped back into the storeroom and again pushed open the glass door of the office.

Mr. Clark still sat on the high stool at his desk, his back toward the door, and his ledger spread out before him.

"Mr. Clark!" I called.

He made no answer.

"Mr. Clark!" I called again, in an elevated key.

He did not stir.

I paused a moment, then went over to him, letting my hand drop lightly on his arm.

Still no response. I only felt the shoulder heave, as with a long-drawn quavering sigh, then heard the regular though labored breathing of a weary man that slept.

I had not the heart to waken him; but lifting the still moistened pen from his unconscious fingers, I wrote where I might be found at eight that evening, folded and addressed the note, and laying it on the open page before him, turned quietly away.

"Poor man!" I mused compassionately, with a touch of youthful sentiment affecting me.—"Poor man! Working himself into his very grave, and with never a sign or murmur of complaint—worn and weighed down with the burden of his work, and yet with a nobleness of spirit and resolve that still conceals behind glad smiles and laughing words the cares that lie so heavily upon him!"

The long afternoon went by at last, and evening came; and, as promptly as my note requested, the jovial Mr. Clark appeared, laughing heartily, as we walked off down the street, at my explanation of the reason I had written my desires instead of verbally addressing him; and laughing still louder when I told him of my fears that he was overworking himself.

"Oh, no, my friend," he answered gaily; "there's no occasion for anxiety on that account.—But the fact is, old man," he went on, half apolo-

getically, "the fact is, I haven't been so overworked, of late, as over-wakeful. There's something in the night I think, that does it. Do you know that the night is a great mystery to me—a great mystery! And it seems to be growing on me all the time. There's the trouble. The night to me is like some vast incomprehensible being. When I write the name 'night' I instinctively write it with a capital. And I like my night deep, and dark, and swarthy, don't you know. Now some like clear and starry nights, but they're too pale for me—too weak and fragile altogether! They're popular with the masses, of course, these blue-eyed, golden-haired, 'moonlight-on-the-lake' nights; but, somehow, I don't 'stand in' with them. My favorite night is the pronounced brunette—the darker the better. To-night is one of my kind, and she's growing more and more like it all the time. If it were not for depriving you of the theater, I'd rather just drift off now in the deepening gloom till swallowed up in it—lost utterly. Come with me, anyhow!"

"Gladly," I answered, catching something of his own enthusiasm; "I myself prefer it to the play."

"I heartily congratulate you on your taste," he said, diving violently for my hand and wringing it. "Oh, it's going to be grimly glorious!—a depth of darkness one can wade out into, and knead in his hands like dough!" And he laughed, himself, at this grotesque conceit.

And so we walked—for hours. Our talk—or, rather, my friend's talk—lulled and soothed at last

into a calmer flow, almost solemn in its tone, and yet fretted with an occasional wildness of utterance and expression.

Half consciously I had been led by my companion, who for an hour had been drawing closer to me as we walked. His arm, thrust through my own, clung almost affectionately. We were now in some strange suburb of the city, evidently, too, in a low quarter, for from the windows of such business rooms and shops as bore any evidence of respectability the lights had been turned out and the doors locked for the night. Only a gruesome green light was blazing in a little drug-store just opposite, while at our left, as we turned the corner, a tumble-down saloon sent out on the night a mingled sound of clicking billiard-balls, discordant voices, the harsher rasping of a violin, together with the sullen plunkings of a banjo.

"I must leave you here for a minute," said my friend, abruptly breaking a long silence, and loosening my arm. "The druggist over there is a patron of our house, and I am reminded of a little business I have with him. He is about closing, too, and I'll see him now, as I may not be down this way again soon. No; you wait here for me—right here," and he playfully but firmly pushed me back, ran across the street, and entered the store. Through the open door I saw him shake hands with the man who stood behind the counter, and stand talking in the same position for some minutes—both still clasping hands, as it seemed; but as I mechanically

bent with closer scrutiny, the druggist seemed to be examining the hand of Mr. Clark and working at it, as though picking at a splinter in the palm—I I could not quite determine what was being done, for a glass show-case blurred an otherwise clear view of the arms of both from the elbows down. Then they came forward, Mr. Clark arranging his cuffs, and the druggist wrapping up some minute article he took from an upper show-case, and handing it to my friend, who placed it in the pocket of his vest and turned away. At this moment my attention was withdrawn by an extra tumult of jeers and harsh laughter in the saloon, from the door of which, even as my friend turned from the door opposite, a drunken woman reeled, and staggering round the corner as my friend came up, fell violently forward on the pavement, not ten steps in our advance. Instinctively, we both sprang to her aid, and bending over the senseless figure, peered curiously at the bruised and bleeding features. My friend was trembling with excitement. He clutched wildly at the limp form, trying, but vainly, to lift the woman to her feet. "Why don't you take hold of her?" he whispered hoarsely. "Help me with her—quick! quick! Lift her up!" I obeyed without a word, though with a shudder of aversion as a drop of hot red blood stung me on the hand.

"Now draw her arm about your shoulder—this way—and hold it so! And now your other arm around her waist—quick, man, quick, as you your-

self will want God's arm about you when you fail! Now, come!" And with no other word we hurried with our burden up the empty darkness of the street.

I was utterly bewildered with it all, but something kept me silent. And so we hurried on, and on, and on, our course directed by my now wholly reticent companion. Where he was going, what his purpose was, I could not but vaguely surmise. I only recognized that his intentions were humane, which fact was emphasized by the extreme caution he took to avoid the two or three late pedestrians that passed us on our way as we stood crowded in concealment —once behind a low shed, once in an entry-way; and once, at the distant rattle of a police whistle, we hurried through the blackness of a narrow alley into the silent street beyond. And on up this we passed, until at last we paused at the gateway of a cottage on our left. On to the door of that we went, my friend first violently jerking the bell, then opening the door with a night-key, and with me lifting the still senseless woman through the hall into a dimly lighted room upon the right, and laying her upon a clean white bed that glimmered in the corner. He reached and turned the gas on in a flaring jet, and as he did so, "This is my home," he whispered, "and this woman is—my mother!" He flung himself upon his knees beside her as he spoke. He laid his quivering lips against the white hair and the ruddy wound upon the brow; then dappled with his

kisses the pale face, and stroked and petted and caressed the faded hands. "O God!" he moaned, "if I might only weep!"

The steps of some one coming down the stairs aroused him. He stepped quickly to the door, and threw it open. It was a woman servant. He simply pointed to the form upon the bed.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed the frightened woman, "what has happened? What has happened to my poor dear mistress?"

"Why did you let her leave the house?"

"She sent me away, sir. I never dreamed that she was going out again. She told me she was very sleepy and wanted to retire, and I helped her to undress before I went. But she ain't bad hurt, is she?" she continued, stooping over the still figure and tenderly smoothing back the disheveled hair. —"It's only the cheek bruised and the forehead cut a little—it's the blood that makes it look like a bad hurt. See, when I bathe it, it is not a bad hurt, sir. She's just been—she's just worn out, poor thing—and she's asleep—that's all."

He made no answer to the woman's speech, but turned toward me. "Five doors from here," he said, "and to your left as you go out, you will find the residence of Dr. Worrel. Go to him for me, and tell him he is wanted here at once. Tell him my mother is much worse. He will understand. I would go myself, but must see about arranging for your comfort upon your return, for you will not leave me till broad daylight—you must not!" I

bowed in silent acceptance of his wishes, and turned upon my errand.

Fortunately, the doctor was at home, and returned at once with me to my friend, where, after a careful examination of his patient, he assured the anxious son that the wounds were only slight, and that her unconscious condition was simply "the result of over-stimulation, perhaps," as he delicately put it. She would doubtless waken in her usual rational state—an occurrence really more to be feared than desired, since her peculiar sensitiveness might feel too keenly the unfortunate happening. "Anyway," he continued, "I will call early in the morning, and, in the event of her awakening before that time, I will leave a sedative with Mary, with directions she will attend to. She will remain here at her side. And as to yourself, Mr. Clark," the doctor went on in an anxious tone, as he marked the haggard face and hollow eyes, "I insist that you retire. You must rest, sir—worrying for the past week as you have been doing is telling on you painfully. You need rest—and you must take it."

"And I will," said Mr. Clark submissively. Stooping again, he clasped the sleeping face between his hands and kissed it tenderly. "Good night!" I heard him whisper—"good night—good night!" He turned, and motioning for me to follow, opened the door—"Doctor, good night! Good night, Mary!"

He led the way to his own room up-stairs. "And now, my friend," he said, as he waved me to an easy chair, "I have but two other favors to ask of you:

The first is, that you talk to me, or read to me, or tell me fairy tales, or riddles—anything, so that you keep it up incessantly, and never leave off till you find me fast asleep. Then in the next room you will find a comfortable bed. Leave me sleeping here, and you sleep there. And the second favor," he continued, with a slow smile and an affected air of great deliberation—"oh, well, I'll not ask the second favor of you now. I'll keep it for you till to-morrow." And as he turned laughingly away and paced three or four times across the room, in his step, his gait, the general carriage of the figure, I was curiously reminded of the time, years before, that I had watched him from the door of the caboose, as he walked up the suburban street till the movement of the train had hidden him from view.

"Well, what will you do?" he asked, as he wheeled a cozy-cushioned lounge close beside my chair, and removing his coat, flung himself languidly down.—"Will you talk or read to me?"

"I will read," I said, as I picked up a book to begin my vigil.

"Hold just a minute, then," he said, drawing a card and pencil from his vest.—"I may want to jot down a note or two.—Now, go ahead."

I had been reading in a low voice steadily for perhaps an hour, my companion never stirring from his first position, but although my eyes were never lifted from the book, I knew by the occasional sound of his pencil that he had not yet dropped asleep.

And so, without a pause, I read monotonously on. At last he turned heavily. I paused. With his eyes closed he groped his hand across my knees and grasped my own. "Go on with the reading," he said drowsily—"Guess I'm going to sleep now—but you go right on with the story.—Good night!" His hand fumbled lingeringly a moment, then was withdrawn and folded with the other on his breast.

I read on in a lower tone an hour longer, then paused again to look at my companion. He was sleeping heavily, and although the features in their repose appeared unusually pale, a wholesome perspiration, as it seemed, pervaded all the face, while the breathing, though labored, was regular. I bent above him to lower the pillow for his head, and the movement half aroused him, as I thought at first, for he muttered something as though impatiently; but listening to catch his mutterings, I knew that he was dreaming. "It's what killed father," I heard him say. "And it's what killed Tom," he went on, in a smothered voice; "killed both—killed both! It shan't kill me; I swear it. I could bottle it—case after case—and never touch a drop. If you never take the first drink, you'll never want it. Mother taught me that. What made her ever take the first? Mother! mother! When I get to be a man, I'll buy her all the fine things she used to have when father was alive. Maybe I can buy back the old home, with the roses up the walk and the sunshine slanting in the hall."

And so the sleeper murmured on. Sometimes the voice was thick and discordant, sometimes low and clear and tuneful as a child's. "Never touch whisky!" he went on, almost harshly. "Never—never! Drop in the street first. I did. The doctor will come then, and he knows what you want. Not whisky.—Medicine; the kind that makes you warm again—makes you want to live; but don't ever dare touch whisky. Let other people drink it if they want it. Sell it to them; they'll get it anyhow; but don't you touch it! It killed your father, it killed Tom, and—oh!—mother! mother! mother!" Tears actually teemed from underneath the sleeper's lids, and glittered down the pallid and distorted features. "There's a medicine that's good for you when you want whisky," he went on.—"When you are weak, and everybody else is strong—and always when the flagstones give way beneath your feet, and the long street undulates and wavers as you walk; why, that's a sign for you to take that medicine—and take it quick! Oh, it will warm you till the little pale blue streaks in your white hands will bulge out again with tingling blood, and it will start up from its stagnant pools and leap from vein to vein till it reaches your being's furthest height and droops and falls and folds down over icy brow and face like a soft veil moistened with pure warmth. Ah! it is so deliriously sweet and restful!"

I heard a moaning in the room below, and then steps on the stairs, and a tapping at the door. It

was Mary. Mrs. Clark had awakened and was crying for her son. "But we must not waken him," I said. "Give Mrs. Clark the medicine the doctor left for her—that will quiet her."

"But she won't take it, sir. She won't do anything at all for me—and if Mr. Clark could only come to her, for just a minute, she would—"

The woman's speech was broken by a shrill cry in the hall, and then the thud of naked feet on the stairway. "I want my boy—my boy!" wailed the hysterical woman from without.

"Go to your mistress—quick," I said sternly, pushing the maid from the room.—"Take her back; I will come down to your assistance in a moment." Then I turned hastily to see if the sleeper had been disturbed by the woman's cries; but all was peaceful with him yet; and so, throwing a coverlet over him, I drew the door to silently and went below.

I found the wretched mother in an almost frenzied state, and her increasing violence alarmed me so that I thought it best to summon the physician again; and bidding the servant not to leave her for an instant, I hurried for the help so badly needed. This time the doctor was long delayed, although he joined me with all possible haste, and with all speed accompanied me back to the unhappy home. Entering the door, our ears were greeted with a shriek that came piercing down the hall till the very echoes shuddered as with fear. It was the patient's voice shrilling from the sleeper's room up-

stairs:—"O God! My boy! my boy! I want my boy, and he will not waken for me!" An instant later we were both upon the scene.

The woman in her frenzy had broken from the servant to find her son. And she had found him.

She had wound her arms about him, and had dragged his still sleeping form upon the floor. He would not waken, even though she gripped him to her heart and shrieked her very soul out in his ears. He would not waken. The face, though whiter than her own, betokened only utter rest and peace. We drew her, limp and voiceless, from his side. "We are too late," the doctor whispered, lifting with his finger one of the closed lids, and letting it drop to again.—"See here!" He had been feeling at the wrist; and, as he spoke, he slipped the sleeve up, bared the sleeper's arm. From the wrist to elbow it was livid purple, and pitted and scarred with minute wounds—some scarcely sealed as yet with clotted blood.

"In heaven's name, what does it all mean?" I asked.

"Morphine," said the doctor, "and the hypodermic. And here," he exclaimed, lifting the other hand—"here is a folded card with your name at the top."

I snatched it from him, and I read, written in faint but rounded characters:

"I like to hear your voice. It sounds kind. It is like a far-off tune. To drop asleep, though, as I am doing now, is sweeter music—but read on.—I

have taken something to make me sleep, and by mistake I have taken too much; but you will read right on. Now, mind you, this is not suicide, as God listens to the whisper of this pencil as I write! I did it by mistake. For years and years I have taken the same thing. This time I took too much—much more than I meant to—but I am glad. This is the second favor I would ask: Go to my employers to-morrow, show them this handwriting, and say I know for my sake they will take charge of my affairs and administer all my estate in the best way suited to my mother's needs. Good-by, my friend—I can only say 'good night' to you when I shall take your hand an instant later and turn away forever."

Through tears I read it all, and ending with his name in full, I turned and looked down on the face of this man that I had learned to love, and the full measure of his needed rest was with him; and the rainy day that glowered and drabbled at the eastern window of the room was as drearily stared back at by a hopeless woman's dull demented eyes.

A NEST-EGG

BUT a few miles from the city here, and on the sloping banks of the stream noted more for its plenitude of "chubs" and "shiners" than the gamier two- and four-pound bass for which, in season, so many credulous anglers flock and lie in wait, stands a country residence, so convenient to the stream, and so inviting in its pleasant exterior and comfortable surroundings—barn, dairy, and spring-house—that the weary, sunburned, and disheartened fisherman, out from the dusty town for a day of recreation, is often wont to seek its hospitality.

The house in style of architecture is something of a departure from the typical farmhouse, being designed and fashioned with no regard to symmetry or proportion, but rather, as is suggested, built to conform to the matter-of-fact and most sensible ideas of its owner, who, if it pleased him, would have small windows where large ones ought to be, and vice versa, whether they balanced properly to the eye or not. And chimneys—he would have as many as he wanted, and no two alike, in either height or size. And if he wanted the front of the house turned from all possible view, as though abashed at any chance of public scrutiny, why, that was his affair and not the public's; and, with like perversity, if he chose to thrust his kitchen under

the public's very nose, what should the generally fagged-out, half-famished representative of that dignified public do but reel in his dead minnow, shoulder his fishing-rod, clamber over the back fence of the old farmhouse and inquire within, or jog back to the city, inwardly anathematizing that particular locality or the whole rural district in general. That is just the way that farmhouse looked to the writer of this sketch one week ago—so individual it seemed—so liberal, and yet so independent. It wasn't even weather-boarded, but, instead, was covered smoothly with cement, as though the plasterers had come while the folks were visiting, and so, unable to get at the interior, had just plastered the outside.

I am more than glad that I was hungry enough, and weary enough, and wise enough to take the house at its first suggestion; for, putting away my fishing-tackle for the morning, at least, I went up the sloping bank, crossed the dusty road, and confidently clambered over the fence.

Not even a growling dog to intimate that I was trespassing. All was open—gracious-looking—pastoral. The sward beneath my feet was velvet-like in elasticity, and the scarce visible path I followed through it led promptly to the open kitchen door. From within I heard a woman singing some old ballad in an undertone, while at the threshold a trim, white-spurred rooster stood poised on one foot, curving his glossy neck and cocking his wattled head as though to catch the meaning of the words.

I paused. It was a scene I felt restrained from breaking in upon, nor would I have, but for the sound of a strong male voice coming around the corner of the house:

"Sir. Howdy!"

Turning, I saw a rough-looking but kindly featured man of sixty-five, evidently the owner of the place.

I returned his salutation with some confusion and much deference. "I must really beg your pardon for this intrusion," I began, "but I have been tiring myself out fishing, and your home here looked so pleasant—and I felt so thirsty—and—"

"Want a drink, I reckon," said the old man, turning abruptly toward the kitchen door, then pausing as suddenly, with a backward motion of his thumb —"jest follow the path here down to the little brick—that's the spring—and you'll find 'at you've come to the right place fer drinkin'-worter! Hold on a minute tel I get you a tumbler—there's nothin' down there but a tin."

"Then don't trouble yourself any further," I said, heartily, "for I'd rather drink from a tin cup than a goblet of pure gold."

"And so'd I," said the old man, reflectively, turning mechanically, and following me down the path. "'Druther drink out of a tin—er jest a fruit-can with the top knocked off—er—er—er a gourd," he added in a zestful, reminiscent tone of voice, that so heightened my impatient thirst that I reached the spring-house fairly in a run.

"Well-sir!" exclaimed my host, in evident delight, as I stood dipping my nose in the second cupful of the cool, revivifying liquid, and peering in a congratulatory kind of way at the blurred and rubicund reflection of my features in the bottom of the cup, "well-sir, blame-don! ef it don't do a feller good to see you enjoyin' of it thataway! But don't you drink too much o' the worter!—'cause there's some sweet milk over there in one o' them crocks, maybe; and ef you'll jest, kind o' keerful-like, lift off the led of that third one, say, over there to yer left, and dip you out a tinful er two o' that, w'y, it'll do you good to drink it, and it'll do me good to see you at it— But hold up!—hold up!" he called, abruptly, as, nowise loath, I bent above the vessel designated. "Hold yer hosses fer a second! Here's Marthy; let her git it fer ye."

If I was at first surprised and confused, meeting the master of the house, I was wholly startled and chagrined in my present position before its mistress. But as I arose, and stammered, in my confusion, some incoherent apology, I was again reassured and put at greater ease by the comprehensive and forgiving smile the woman gave me, as I yielded her my place, and, with lifted hat, awaited her further kindness.

"I came just in time, sir," she said, half laughingly, as with strong, bare arms she reached across the gurgling trough and replaced the lid that I had partially removed.—"I came just in time, I see, to prevent father from having you dip into the morn-

ing's-milk, which, of course, has scarcely a veil of cream over the face of it as yet. But men, as you are doubtless willing to admit," she went on jocularly, "don't know about these things. You must pardon father, as much for his well-meaning ignorance of such matters, as for this cup of cream, which I am sure you will better relish."

She arose, still smiling, with her eyes turned frankly on my own. And I must be excused when I confess that as I bowed my thanks, taking the proffered cup and lifting it to my lips, I stared with an uncommon interest and pleasure at the donor's face.

She was a woman of certainly not less than forty years of age. But the figure, and the rounded grace and fulness of it, together with the features and the eyes, completed as fine a specimen of physical and mental health as ever it has been my fortune to meet; there was something so full of purpose and resolve—something so wholesome, too, about the character—something so womanly—I might almost say manly, and would, but for the petty prejudice maybe occasioned by the trivial fact of a locket having dropped from her bosom as she knelt; and that trinket still dangles in my memory even as it then dangled and dropped back to its concealment in her breast as she arose. But her face, by no means handsome in the common sense of the word, was marked with a breadth and strength of outline and expression that approacheed the heroic—a face that once seen is forever fixed in memory—a per-

sonage once met one must know more of. And so it was, that an hour later, as I strolled with the old man about his farm, looking, to all intents, with the profoundest interest at his Devonshires, Shorthorns, Jerseys, and the like, I lured from him something of an outline of his daughter's history.

"There're no better girl 'n Marthy!" he said, mechanically answering some ingenious allusion to her worth. "And yit," he went on reflectively, stooping from his seat in the barn door and with his open jack-knife picking up a little chip with the point of the blade—"and yit—you wouldn't believe it—but Marthy was the oldest o' three daughters, and hed—I may say—hed more advantages o' marryin'—and yit, as I was jest goin' to say, she's the very one 'at didn't marry. Hed every advantage—Marthy did. W'y, we even hed her educated—her mother was a-livin' then—and we was well enough fixed to afford the educatin' of her, mother allus contended—and we was—besides, it was Marthy's notion, too, and you know how women is thataway when they git their head set. So we sent Marthy down to Indianop'lus, and got her books and put her in school there, and paid fer her keepin' and ever'thing; and she jest—well, you may say, lived there stiddy fer better'n four year. O' course she'd git back ever' once-an-a-while, but her visits was allus, some-way-another, onsatisfactory-like, 'cause, you see, Marthy was allus my favorite, and I'd allus laughed and told her 'at the other girls could git marrid ef they wanted, but *she* was goin'

"Marthy was allus my favorite"

to be the 'nest-egg' of our family, and 'slong as I lived I wanted her at home with me. And she'd laugh and contend 'at she'd as li'f be an old maid as not, and never expected to marry, ner didn't want to.

"But she had me sceart onc't, though! Come out from the city one time, durin' the army, with a peart-lookin' young feller in blue clothes and gilt straps on his shoulders. Young lieutenant he was —name o' Morris. Was layin' in camp there in the city som'er's. I disremember which camp it was now adzackly—but anyway, it 'peared like he had plenty o' time to go and come, fer from that time on he kep' on a-comin'—ever' time Marthy 'ud come home, he'd come, too; and I got to noticin' 'at Marthy come home a good 'eal more'n she used to afore Morris first brought her. And blame' ef the thing didn't git to worryin' me! And onc't I spoke to mother about it, and told her ef I thought the feller wanted to marry Marthy I'd jest stop his comin' right then and there. But mother she sort o' smiled and said somepin' 'bout men a-never seein' through nothin'; and when I ast her what she meant, w'y, she ups and tells me 'at Morris didn't keer nothin' fer Marthy, ner Marthy fer Morris, and then went on to tell me that Morris was kind o' aidgin' up to'rds Annie—she was next to Marthy, you know, in p'int of years and experience, but ever'body allus said 'at Annie was the purtiest one o' the whole three of 'em. And so when mother told me 'at the signs p'inted to'rds Annie, w'y, of

course, I hedn't no particular objections to that, 'cause Morris was of good fambly enough it turned out, and, in fact, was as stirrin' a young feller as ever I' want fer a son-in-law, and so I hed nothin' more to say—ner they wasn't no occasion to say nothin', 'cause right along about then I begin to notice 'at Marthy quit comin' home so much, and Morris kep' a-comin' more.

"Tel finally, one time he was out here all by hisself, 'long about dusk, come out here where I was feedin', and ast me, all at onct, and in a straightfor'ard way, ef he couldn't marry Annie; and, some-way-another, blame' ef it didn't make me happy as him when I told him yes! You see that thing proved, pine-blank, 'at he wasn't a-fishin' round fer Marthy. Well-sir, as luck would hev it, Marthy got home about a half-hour later, and I'll give you my word I was never so glad to see the girl in my life! It was foolish in me, I reckon, but when I see her drivin' up the lane—it was purt' nigh dark then, but I could see her through the open winder from where I was sittin' at the supper-table, and so I jest quietly excused myself, p'lite-like, as a feller will, you know, when they's comp'ny round, and slipped off and met her jest as she was about to git out to open the barn gate. 'Hold up, Marthy,' says I; 'set right where you air; I'll open the gate fer you, and I'll do anything else fer you in the world 'at you want me to!'

"'W'y, what's pleased *you* so?' she says, laughin', as she druv through slow-like and a-ticklin' my

nose with the cracker of the buggy-whip.—'What's pleased *you?*'

"'Guess,' says I, jerkin' the gate to, and turnin' to lift her out.

"'The new peanner's come?' says she, eager-like.

"'Yer new peanner's come,' says I, 'but that's not it.'

"'Strawberries for supper?' says she.

"'Strawberries fer supper,' says I; 'but that ain't it.'

"Jest then Morris's hoss whinnied in the barn, and she glanced up quick and smilin' and says, 'Somebody come to see somebody?'

"'You're a-gittin' warm,' says I.

"'Somebody come to see *me?*' she says, anxious-like.

"'No,' says I, 'and I'm glad of it—fer this one 'at's come wants to git married, and o' course I wouldn't harber in my house no young feller 'at was a-layin' round fer a chance to steal away the "Nest-egg,"' says I, laughin'.

"Marthy had riz up in the buggy by this time, but as I helt up my hands to her, she sort o' drawed back a minute, and says, all serious-like and kind o' whisperin':

"'Is it *Annie?*'

"I nodded. 'Yes,' says I, 'and what's more, I've give my consent, and mother's give hern—the thing's all settled. Come, jump out and run in and be happy with the rest of us!' and I helt out my hands ag'in, but she didn't 'pear to take no heed. She

was kind o' pale, too, I thought, and swallered a time er two like as ef she couldn't speak plain.

"'Who is the man?' she ast.

"'Who—who's the man,' I says, a-gittin' kind o' out o' patience with the girl.—'W'y, you know who it is, o' course.—It's Morris,' says I. 'Come, jump down! Don't you see I'm waitin' fer ye?'

"'Then take me,' she says; and blame-don! ef the girl didn't keel right over in my arms as limber as a rag! Clean fainted away! Honest! Jest the excitement, I reckon, o' breakin' it to her so suddent-like—'cause she liked Annie, I've sometimes thought, better'n even she did her own mother. Didn't go half so hard with her when her other sister married. Yes-sir!" said the old man, by way of sweeping conclusion, as he rose to his feet—"Marthy's the on'y one of 'em 'at never married—both the others is gone—Morris went all through the army and got back safe and sound—'s livin' in Idyho, and doin' fust-rate. Sends me a letter ever' now and then. Got three little chunks o' grand-children out there, and I never laid eyes on one of 'em. You see, I'm a-gittin' to be quite a middle-aged man—in fact, a very middle-aged man, you might say. Sence mother died, which has be'n—lem-me-see—mother's be'n dead som'er's in the neighberhood o' ten years.—Sence mother died I've be'n a-gittin' more and more o' *Marthy's* notion—that is,—you couldn't ever hire *me* to marry nobody! and them has allus be'n and still is the 'Nest-egg's' views! Listen! That's her a-callin' fer us now.

You must sort o' overlook the freedom, but I told Marthy you'd promised to take dinner with us to-day, and it 'ud never do to disappoint her now. Come on." And ah! it would have made the soul of you either rapturously glad or madly envious to see how meekly I consented.

I am always thinking that I never tasted coffee till that day; I am always thinking of the crisp and steaming rolls, ored over with the molten gold that hinted of the clover-fields, and the bees that had not yet permitted the honey of the bloom and the white blood of the stalk to be divorced; I am thinking that the young and tender pullet we happy three discussed was a near and dear relative of the gay patrician rooster that I first caught peering so inquisitively in at the kitchen door; and I am always—always thinking of "The Nest-egg."

"THE BOY FROM ZEENY"

HIS advent in our little country town was at once abrupt and novel. Why he came, when he came, or how he came, we boys never knew. My first remembrance of him is of his sudden appearance in the midst of a game of "Ant'ny-over," in which a dozen boys besides myself were most enthusiastically engaged. The scene of the exciting contest was the center of the main street of the town, the elevation over which we tossed the ball being the skeleton remains of a grand triumphal arch, left as a sort of cadaverous reminder of some recent political demonstration. Although I recall the boy's external appearance upon that occasion with some vagueness, I vividly remember that his trousers were much too large and long, and that his heavy, flapping coat was buttonless, and very badly worn and damaged at the sleeves and elbows. I remember, too, with even more distinctness, the hat he wore; it was a high, silk, bell-crowned hat—a man's hat and a veritable "plug"—not a new and shiny "plug," by any means, but still of dignity and gloss enough to furnish a noticeable contrast to the other appurtenances of its wearer's wardrobe. In fact, it was through this latter article of dress that

the general attention of the crowd came at last to be drawn particularly to its unfortunate possessor, who, evidently directed by an old-time instinct, had mechanically thrust the inverted "castor" under a falling ball, and the ball, being made of yarn wrapped tightly over a green walnut, and dropping from an uncommon height, had gone through the hat like a round shot.

Naturally enough much merriment was occasioned by the singular mishap, and the victim of the odd occurrence seemed himself inclined to join in the boisterous laughter and make the most of his ridiculous misfortune. He pulled the hat back over his tousled head, and with the flapping crown of it still clinging by one frayed hinge, he capered through a grotesquely executed jig that made the clamorous crowd about him howl again.

"Wo! what a hat!" cried Billy Kinzey, derisively, and with a palpably rancorous twinge of envy in his heart; for Billy was the bad boy of our town, and would doubtless have enjoyed the strange boy's sudden notoriety in thus being able to convert disaster into positive fun. "Wo! what a hat!" reiterated Billy, making a feint to knock it from the boy's head as the still capering figure pirouetted past him.

The boy's eye caught the motion, and he whirled suddenly in a backward course and danced past his reviler again, this time much nearer than before. "Better try it," he said, in a low, half-laughing tone that no one heard but Billy and myself. He

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was out of range in an instant, still laughing as he went.

"Durn him!" said Billy, with stifling anger, clutching his fist and leaving one knuckle protruding in a very wicked-looking manner.—"Durn him! He better not sass me! He's afeard to come past here ag'in and say that! I'll knock his durn ole stove-pipe in the middle o' nex' week!"

"You will, hey?" queried a revolving voice, as the boy twirled past again—this time so near that Billy felt his taunting breath blown in his face.

"Yes, I 'will, hey'!" said Billy, viciously; and with a side-sweeping, flat-handed lick that sounded like striking a rusty sheet of tin, the crownless "plug" went spinning into the gutter, while, as suddenly, the assaulted little stranger, with a peculiarly pallid smile about his lips and an electric glitter in his eye, adroitly flung his left hand forward, smiting his insulter such a blow in the region of the brow that the unguarded Billy went tumbling backward, his plucky assailant prancing wildly around his prostrate form.

"Oh! come and see me!" snarled the strange boy, in a contemptuous tone, cocking his fists up in a scientific manner, and dropping into a stoop-shouldered swagger that would have driven envy into the heart of a bullying hack-driver. "Git the bloke on his pins!" he sneered, turning to the crowd.—"S'pose I'm goin' to hit a man w'en he's down?"

But his antagonist needed no such assistance. Stung with his unlooked-for downfall, bleeding

from the first blow ever given him by mortal boy, and goaded to absolute frenzy by the taunts of his swaggering enemy, Billy sprang to his feet, and a moment later had succeeded in closing with the boy in a rough-and-tumble fight, in which his adversary was at a disadvantage, being considerably smaller, hampered, too, with his loose, unbuttoned coat and baggy trousers. But, for all that, he did some very efficient work in the way of a deft and telling blow or two upon the nose of his overpowering foe, who sat astride his wriggling body, but wholly unable to get in a lick.

"Durn you!" said Billy, with his hand gripping the boy's throat, "holler 'nough!"

"Holler nothin'!" gurgled the boy, with his eyes fairly starting from his head.

"Oh, let him up, Billy," called a compassionate voice from the excited crowd.

"Holler 'nough and I will," said Billy, in a tragic whisper in the boy's ear. "Durn ye! holler 'Calf-rope!'"

The boy only shook his head, trembled convulsively, let fall his eyelids, and lay limp and, to all appearances, unconscious.

The startled Billy loosed his hold, rose half-way to his feet, then fiercely pounced again at his rival.

But it was too late.—The ruse had succeeded, and the boy was once more on his feet.

"You fight like a dog!" said the strange boy, in a tone of infinite contempt—"and you *air* a dog! Put up yer props like a man and come at me, and

I'll meller yer head till yer mother won't know you! Come on! I dare you!"

This time, as Billy started forward at the challenge, I regret to say that in his passion he snatched up from the street a broken buggy-spoke, before which warlike weapon the strange boy was forced warily to retreat. Step by step he gave way, and step by step his threatening foe advanced. I think, perhaps, part of the strange boy's purpose in thus retreating was to arm himself with one of the "ax-handles" that protruded from a churn standing in front of a grocery, toward which he slowly backed across the sidewalk. However that may be, it is evident he took no note of an open cellar-way that lay behind him, over the brink of which he deliberately backed, throwing up his hands as he disappeared.

We heard a heavy fall, but heard no cry. Some loungers in the grocery, attracted by the clamor of the throng without, came to the door inquiringly; one man, learning what had happened, peered down the stairway of the cellar, and called to ask the boy if he was hurt, which query was answered an instant later by the appearance of the boy himself, his face far whiter than his shirt, and his lips trembling, but his teeth clenched.

"Guess I broke my arm ag'in," he said, briefly, as the man leaned over and helped him up the steps, the boy sweeping his keen eyes searchingly over the faces of the crowd. "It's the *right* arm, though," he continued, glancing at the injured member dang-

ling helplessly at his side—"*this-'un's* all right yet!" and as he spoke he jerked from the man's assistance, wheeled round, and an instant later, as a buggy-spoke went hurtling through the air, he slapped the bewildered face of Billy with his open hand. "Dam' coward!" he said.

Then the man caught him, and drew him back, and the crowd closed in between the combatants, following, as the boy with the broken arm was hurried down street to the doctor's office, where the door was immediately closed on the rabble and all the mystery within—not an utter mystery, either, for three or four enterprising and sagacious boys slipped off from the crowd that thronged in front, and climbing by a roundabout way and over a high board fence into the back yard, secretly posted themselves at the blinded window in the rear of the little one-roomed office and breathlessly awaited news from within.

"They got him laid out on the settee," whispered a venturous boy who had leaned a board against the window-sill and climbed into a position commanding the enviable advantage of a broken window-pane. "I kin see him through a hole in the curtain. Keep still!

"They got his coat off, and his sleeve rolled up," whispered the boy, in continuation—"and the doctor's a-givin' him some medicine in a tumbler. Now he's a-pullin' his arm. Gee-mun-nee! I kin hear the bones crunch!"

"Hain't he a-cryin'?" queried a milk-faced boy, with very large blue eyes and fine white hair, and a grieved expression as he spoke.—"Hain't he a-cryin'?"

"Well, he hain't!" said the boy in the window, with unconscious admiration. "Listen!

"I heerd him thist tell 'em 'at it wasn't the first time his arm was broke. Now keep still!" and the boy in the window again bent his ear to the broken pane.

"He says both his arm's be'n broke," continued the boy in the window—"says this-'un 'at's broke now's be'n broke two times 'fore this time."

"Dog-gone! hain't he a funny feller!" said the milk-faced boy, with his big eyes lifted wistfully to the boy in the window.

"He says onc't his pap broke his arm w'en he was whippin' him," whispered the boy in the window.

"Bet his pa's a wicked man!" said the milk-faced boy, in a dreamy, speculative way—"s'pect he's a drunkard, er somepin'!"

"Keep still," said the boy at the window; "they're tryin' to git him to tell his pap's name and his, and he won't do it, 'cause he says his pap comes and steals him ever' time he finds out where he is."

The milk-faced boy drew a long, quavering breath and gazed suspiciously round the high board fence of the enclosure.

"He says his pap used to keep a liberty-stable in Zeeny—in Ohio som'er's,—but he daresn't stay

round *there* no more, 'cause he broke up there, and had to skedaddle er they'd clean him out! He says he hain't got no mother, ner no brothers, ner no sisters, ner no nothin'—on'y," the boy in the window added, with a very dry and painful swallow, "he says he hain't got nothin' on'y thist the clothes on his back!"

"Yes, and I bet," broke in the milk-faced boy, abruptly, with his thin lips compressed, and his big eyes fixed on space—"yes, and I bet he kin lick Billy Kinzey, ef his arm *is* broke!"

At this juncture, some one inside coming to raise the window, the boy at the broken pane leaped to the ground, and, flocking at his heels, his frightened comrades bobbed one by one over the horizon of the high fence and were gone in an instant.

So it was the hero of this sketch came to be known as "The Boy from Zeeny."

The Boy from Zeeny, though evidently predisposed to novel and disastrous happenings, for once, at least, had come upon a streak of better fortune; for the doctor, it appeared, had someway taken a fancy to him, and had offered him an asylum at his own home and hearth—the compensation stipulated, and suggested by the boy himself, being a conscientious and efficient service in the doctor's stable. Even with his broken arm splinted and bandaged and supported in a sling, The Boy from Zeeny could daily be seen loping the doctor's spirited horse up the back alley from the stable to the of-

fice, with the utter confidence and careless grace of a Bedouin. When, at last, the injured arm was wholly well again, the daring feats of horsemanship of which the boy was capable were listened to with incredulity by the "good" boys of the village school, who never played "hooky" on long summer afternoons, and, in consequence, never had a chance of witnessing The Boy from Zeeny loping up to the "swimmin'-hole," a mile from town, barebacked, with nothing but a halter, and his face turned toward the horse's tail. In fact The Boy from Zeeny displayed such a versatility of accomplishments, and those, too, of a character but faintly represented in the average boy of the country town, that, for all the admiration their possessor evoked, an equal envy was aroused in many a youthful breast.

"The boys in this town's down on you!" said a cross-eyed, freckled-faced boy, one day, to The Boy from Zeeny.

The Boy from Zeeny was sitting in the alley window of the hayloft of the doctor's stable, and the cross-eyed boy had paused below, and, with his noward-looking eyes upturned, stood waiting the effect of this intelligence.

"What do I care for the boys in this town?" said The Boy from Zeeny.

"The boys in this town," repeated the cross-eyed boy, with a slow, prophetic flourish of his head—"the boys in this town says 'cause you come from

Zeeny and blacked Billy Kinzey's eye, 'at you think you're goin' to run things round here! And you'll find out you ain't the bosst o' this town!" and the cross-eyed boy shook his head again with dire foreboding.

"Looky here, Cocky!" said The Boy from Zeeny, trying to focus a direct gaze on the boy's delusive eyes, "w'y don't you talk straight out from the shoulder? I reckon 'the boys in this town,' as you call 'em, didn't send *you* round here to tell me what *they* was goin' to do! But ef you want to take it up fer 'em, and got any sand to back you, jest say it, and I'll come down there and knock them durn twisted eyes o' yourn straight ag'in!"

"Yes, you will!" muttered the cross-eyed boy, with dubious articulation, glancing uneasily up the alley.

"What?" growled The Boy from Zeeny, thrusting one dangling leg farther out the window, supporting his weight by the palms of his hands, and poised as though about to spring—"what 'id you say?"

"Didn't say nothin'," said the cross-eyed boy, feebly; and then, as a sudden and most bewildering smile lighted up his defective eyes, he exclaimed: "Oh, I tell you what le's do! Le's me and you git up a show in your stable, and don't let none o' the other boys be in it! I kin turn a handspring like you, and purt' nigh walk on my hands; and you kin p'form on the slack-rope—and spraddle out like the 'inja-rubber man'—and hold a pitch-

fork on yer chin—and stand up on a horse 'ithout a-holdin'—and—and—Oh! ever'thing!" And as the cross-eyed boy breathlessly concluded this list of strong attractions, he had The Boy from Zeeny so thoroughly inoculated with the enterprise that he warmly closed with the proposition, and the preparations and the practise for the show were at once inaugurated.

Three hours later, an extremely cross-eyed boy, with the freckles of his face thrown into vivid relief by an intense pallor, rushed pantingly into the doctor's office with the fateful intelligence that The Boy from Zeeny had "fell and broke his arm ag'in." And this time, as it seemed, the hapless boy had surpassed the seriousness of all former fractures, this last being of a compound nature, and very painful in the setting, and tedious in recovery; the recovery, too, being anything but perfect, since it left the movement of the elbow somewhat restricted, and threw the little fellow's arm into an unnatural position, with the palm of the hand turned forward as he walked. But for all that, the use of it was, to all appearances, little impaired.

Doubtless it was through such interludes from rough service as these accidents afforded that The Boy from Zeeny had acquired the meager education he possessed. The doctor's wife, who had from the first been kind to him, grew to like him very much. Through her gentle and considerate interest he was stimulated to study by the occasional present of a

simple volume. Oftentimes the good woman would devote an hour to his instruction in the mysteries of the book's orthography and rhetoric.

Nor was The Boy from Zeeny a dull pupil, nor was he an ungrateful one. He was quick to learn, and never prouder than when a mastered lesson gained for him the approbation of his patient instructor.

The history of The Boy from Zeeny, such as had been gathered by the doctor and his wife, was corroborative in outline with the brief hint of it communicated to the curious listeners at the rear window of the doctor's office on the memorable day of the boy's first appearance in the town. He was without family, save a harsh, unfeeling father, who, from every evidence, must have neglected and abused the child most shamefully, the circumstantial proof of this fact being evidenced in the boy's frank acknowledgment that he had repeatedly "run away" from him, and his still firm resolve to keep his name a secret, lest he might thereby be traced to his present security and fall once more into the hands of his unnatural parent.

Certain it was that the feelings of all who knew the lad's story showed hearty sympathy with him, and when one morning it was rumored that The Boy from Zeeny had mysteriously disappeared, and the rumor rapidly developed into an unquestionable fact, there was a universal sense of regret in the little town, which in turn resolved itself into positive indignation when it was learned from the doc-

tor that an explanation, printed in red keel on the back of a fragment of circus-poster, had been found folded and tucked away in the buckle-strap of his horse's bridle. The somewhat remarkable communication, in sprawling capitals, ran thus:

"PAPS GOT ME AGIN. I HAF TO GO. DAM HIM. DOC TEL HER TO KEEP MY BOOCKS. GOOD BY. I FED OLE CHARLY. I FED HIM OTES AND HA AN CORN. HE WONT NEED NO MORE FER A WEAK. AN BRAND TO. DOC TEL HER GOOD BY."

It was a curious bit of composition—uncouth, assuredly, and marred, maybe, with an unpardonable profanity—but it served. In the silence and gloom of the old stable, the doctor's fingers trembled as he read, and the good wife's eyes, peering anxiously above his heaving shoulder, filled and overflowed with tears.

I wish that it were in the veracious sequence of this simple history to give this wayward boy back to the hearts that loved him, and that still in memory enshrine him with affectionate regard; but the hapless lad—the little ragged twelve-year-old that wandered out of nowhere into town, and wandered into nowhere out again—never returned. Yet we who knew him in those old days—we who were children with him, and, in spite of boyish jealousy and petty bickerings, admired the gallant spirit of the lad—are continually meeting with reminders of him; the last instance of which, in my own experience, I can not refrain from offering here:

For years I have been a wanderer from the dear

old town of my nativity, but through all my wanderings a gracious fate has always kept me somewhere in its pleasant neighborhood, and, in consequence, I often pay brief visits to the scenes of my long-vanished boyhood. It was during such a visit, but a few short years ago, that remembrances of my lost youth were most forcibly recalled by the progress of the county fair, which institution I was permitted to attend through the kindness of an old chum who drove me over in his buggy.

Although it was not the day for racing, we found the track surrounded by a dense crowd of clamorous and applauding people.

"What does it mean?" I asked my friend, as he guided his horse in and out among the trees toward the edge of the enclosure.

"It's Professor Andrus, I suspect," he answered, rising in the buggy as he spoke, and peering eagerly above the heads of the surging multitude.

"And who's Professor Andrus?" I asked, striking a match against the tire of the now stationary buggy-wheel, and lighting the stump of my cigar.

"Why, haven't you heard of the famous Professor?" he answered, laughingly—immediately adding in a serious tone: "Professor Andrus is the famous 'horse-tamer' who has been driving the country absolutely wild here for two or three days. Stand up here where you can see!" he went on, excitedly.

"Yonder he comes! Isn't that splendid?"

And it was.

Across the sea of heads, and facing toward us

down the track, I caught sight of a glossy span of horses that in their perfect beauty of symmetry, high heads and tossing manes looked as though they were just prancing out of some Arabian dream. The animals seemed nude of rein or harness, save only a jeweled strap that crossed the breast of each, together with a slender trace at either side connecting with a jaunty little phaeton whose glittering wheels slivered the sunshine into splinters as they spun. Upon the narrow seat of the airy vehicle sat the driver. No lines were wound about his hands —no shout or lash to goad the horses to their telling speed. They were simply directed and controlled by the graceful motions of a long and slender whip which waved slowly to and fro above their heads. The great crowd cheered the master as he came. He arose deliberately, took off his hat, and bowed. The applause was deafening. Still standing, he whizzed past us and was gone. But something in the manner of the handsome fellow struck me with a strange sense of familiarity. Was it the utter disregard of fear that I saw on his face? Was it the keenness of the eye and the perfect self-possession of the man? Or was it—was it the peculiar way in which the right arm had dropped to his side after his salute to us while curving past us, and did I fancy, for that reason, that the palm of his hand turned forward as he stood?

"Clear the track, there!" came a far voice across the ring.—"Don't cross there, in God's name! Drive back!"

The warning evidently came too late. There was an instant's breathless silence, then a far-away, pent-sounding clash, then utter havoc in the crowd: The ropes about the ring were broken over, and a tumultuous tide of people poured across the ring, myself borne on the very foremost wave.

"Jest the buggy smashed, that's all!" cried a voice. "The hosses hain't hurt—ner the man."

The man referred to was the Professor. I caught a glimpse of him as he rose from the grassy bank where he had been flung. He was very pale, but calm. An uncouth man brought him his silk hat from where it had rolled in the dust.

"Wish you'd just take this handkerchief and brush it off," said the Professor; "I guess I've broke my arm."

It was The Boy from Zeeny.

WHERE IS MARY ALICE SMITH?

"WHERE—is—Mary—Alice—Smith? Oh—she—has—gone—home!" It was the thin mysterious voice of little Mary Alice Smith herself that so often queried and responded as above—every word accented with a sweet and eery intonation, and a very gaiety of solemn earnestness that baffled the cunning skill of all childish imitators. A slender wisp of a girl she was, not more than ten years in appearance, though her age had been given to us as fourteen. The spindle ankles thar she so airily flourished from the sparse concealment of a worn and shadowy calico skirt seemed scarce a fraction more in girth than the slim blue-veined wrists she tossed among the loose and ragged tresses of her yellow hair, as she danced around the room. She was, from the first, an object of curious and most refreshing interest to our family—to us children in particular—an interest, though years and years have interposed to shroud it in the dull dust of forgetfulness, that still remains vivid and bright and beautiful. Whether an orphan child only, or with a father that could thus lightly send her adrift, I do not know now, nor do I care to ask, but I do recall distinctly that on a raw bleak day in early winter she was brought to us, from a wild country

settlement, by a reputed uncle—a gaunt round-shouldered man, with deep eyes and sallow cheeks and weedy-looking beard, as we curiously watched him from the front window stolidly swinging this little, blue-lipped, red-nosed waif over the muddy wagon-wheel to father's arms, like so much country produce. And even as the man resumed his seat upon the thick board laid across the wagon, and sat chewing a straw, with spasmodic noddings of the head, as some brief further conference detained him, I remember mother quickly lifting my sister up from where we stood, folding and holding the little form in unconscious counterpart of father and the little girl without. And how we gathered round her when father brought her in, and mother fixed a cozy chair for her close to the blazing fire, and untied the little summer hat, with its hectic trimmings, together with the dismal green veil that had been bound beneath it round the little tingling ears. The hollow, pale blue eyes of the child followed every motion with an alertness that suggested a somewhat suspicious mind.

"Dave gimme that!" she said, her eyes proudly following the hat as mother laid it on the pillow of the bed. "Mustn't git it mussed up, sir! er you'll have Dave in yer wool!" she continued warningly, as our childish interest drew us to a nearer view of the gaudy article in question.

Half awed, we shrank back to our first wonderment, one of us, however, with the bravery to ask: "Who's Dave?"

"Who's Dave?" reiterated the little voice half scornfully.—"W'y, Dave's a great big boy! Dave works on Barnes's place. And he kin purt' nigh make a full hand, too. Dave's purt' nigh tall as your pap! He's purt' nigh growed up—Dave is! And—David—Mason—Jeffries," she continued, jauntily teetering her head from left to right, and for the first time introducing that peculiar deliberation of accent and undulating utterance that we afterward found to be her quaintest and most charming characteristic—"and—David—Mason—Jeffries—he—likes—Mary—Alice—Smith!" And then she broke abruptly into the merriest laughter, and clapped her little palms together till they fairly glowed.

"And who's Mary Alice Smith?" clamored a chorus of merry voices.

The elfish figure straightened haughtily in the chair. Folding the slender arms tightly across her breast, and tilting her wan face back with an imperious air, she exclaimed sententiously, "W'y, Mary Alice Smith is me—that's who Mary Alice Smith is!"

It was not long, however, before her usual bright and infectious humor was restored, and we were soon piloting the little stranger here and there about the house, and laughing at the thousand funny little things she said and did. The winding stairway in the hall quite dazed her with delight. Up and down she went a hundred times, it seemed. And she would talk and whisper to herself, and oftentimes

would stop and nestle down and rest her pleased face close against the steps and pat one softly with her slender hand, peering curiously down at us with half-averted eyes. And she counted them and named them, every one, as she went up and down.

"I'm mighty glad I'm come to live in this-here house," she said.

We asked her why.

"Oh, 'cause," she said, starting up the stairs again by an entirely novel and original method of her own— "'cause Uncle Tomps ner Aunt 'Lizabeth don't live here; and when they ever come here to git their dinners, like they will ef you don't watch out, w'y, then I kin slip out here on these-here stairs and play like I was climbin' up to the Good World where my mother is—that's why!"

Then we hushed our laughter, and asked her where her home was, and what it was like, and why she didn't like her Uncle Tomps and Aunt 'Lizabeth, and if she wouldn't want to visit them sometimes.

"Oh, yes," she artlessly answered in reply to the concluding query; "I'll want to go back there lots o' times; but not to see them! I'll—only—go—back—there—to—see"—and here she was holding up the little flared-out fingers of her left hand, and with the index finger of the right touching their pink tips in ordered notation with the accent of every gleeful word—"I'll—only—go—back—there—to—see—David—Mason—Jeffries—'cause—he's—the—boy—fer—me!" And then she clapped her

hands again and laughed in that half-hysterical, half-musical way of hers till we all joined in and made the echoes of the old hall ring again. "And then," she went on, suddenly throwing out an imperative gesture of silence—"and then, after I've been in this-here house a long, long time, and you all gits so's you like me awful—awful—awful well, then some day you'll go in that room there—and that room there—and in the kitchen—and out on the porch—and down the cellar—and out in the smoke-house—and the wood-house—and the loft—and all around—oh, ever' place—and in here—and up the stairs—and all them rooms up there—and you'll look behind all the doors—and in all the cubboards—and under all the beds—and then you'll look sorry-like, and holler out, kind o' skeert, and you'll say: 'Where—is—Mary—Alice—Smith?' And then you'll wait and listen and hold yer breath; and then somepin' 'll holler back, away fur off, and say: 'Oh—she—has—gone—home!' And then ever'thing'll be all still ag'in, and you'll be afraid to holler any more—and you dursn't play—and you can't laugh, and yer throat'll thist hurt and hurt, like you been a-eatin' too much calamus-root er somepin'!" And as the little gipsy concluded her weird prophecy, with a final flourish of her big pale eyes, we glanced furtively at one another's awestruck faces, with a superstitious dread of a vague indefinite disaster most certainly awaiting us around some shadowy corner of the future. Through all this speech she had been slowly and silently groping up the wind-

ing steps, her voice growing fainter and fainter, and the littly pixy form fading, and wholly vanishing at last around the spiral banister of the upper landing. Then down to us from that alien recess came the voice alone, touched with a tone as of wild entreaty and despair: "Where—is—Mary—Alice—Smith?" And then a long breathless pause, in which our wide-eyed group below huddled still closer, pale and mute. Then—far off and faint and quavering with a tenderness of pathos that dews the eyes of memory even now—came, like a belated echo, the voice all desolate: "Oh—she—has—gone—home!"

What a queer girl she was, and what a fascinating influence she unconsciously exerted over us! We never tired of her presence; but she, deprived of ours by the many household tasks that she herself assumed, so rigidly maintained and deftly executed, seemed always just as happy when alone as when in our boisterous, fun-loving company. Such resources had Mary Alice Smith—such a wonderful inventive fancy! She could talk to herself—a favorite amusement, I might almost say a popular amusement, of hers, since these monologues at times would involve numberless characters, chipping in from manifold quarters of a wholesale discussion, and querying and exaggerating, agreeing and controverting, till the dishes she was washing would clash and clang excitedly in the general badinage. Loaded with a pyramid of glistening cups and saucers, she would improvise a gallant line of march

from the kitchen table to the pantry, heading an imaginary procession, and whistling a fife-tune that would stir your blood. Then she would trippingly return, rippling her rosy fingers up and down the keys of an imaginary portable piano, or stammering flat-soled across the floor, chuffing and tooting like a locomotive. And she would gravely propound to herself the most intricate riddles—ponder thoughtfully and in silence over them—hazard the most ridiculous answers, and laugh derisively at her own affected ignorance. She would guess again and again, and assume the most gleeful surprise upon at last giving the proper answer, and then she would laugh jubilantly, and mockingly scout herself with having given out "a fool-riddle" that she could guess "with both eyes shut."

"Talk about riddles," she said abruptly to us, one evening after supper, as we lingered watching her clearing away the table—"talk about riddles, it—takes— David—Mason—Jeffries—to—tell—riddles! Bet you don't know

> 'Riddle-cum, riddle-cum right!
> Where was I last Saturd'y night?
> The winds blow—the boughs did shake—
> I saw the hole a fox did make!'"

Again we felt that indefinable thrill never separate from the strange utterance, suggestive always of some dark mystery, and fascinating and holding the childish fancy in complete control.

"Bet you don't know this-'un neether:

'A holler-hearted father,
And a hump-back mother—
Three black orphants
All born together!'"

We were dumb.

"You can't guess nothin'!" she said half pityingly. "W'y, them's easy as fallin' off a chunk! First-un's a man named Fox, and he kilt his wife and chopped her head off, and they was a man named Wright lived in that neighberhood—and he was a-goin' home—and it was Saturd'y night—and he was a-comin' through the big woods—and they was a storm—and Wright he clumb a tree to git out of the rain, and while he was up there here come along a man with a dead woman—and a pickax, and a spade. And he drug the dead woman under the same tree where Mr. Wright was—so ever' time it 'ud lightnin', w'y, Wright he could look down and see him a-diggin' a grave there to bury the woman in. So Wright, he kep' still tel he got her buried all right, you know, and went back home; and then he clumb down and lit out fer town, and waked up the constabul—and he got a supeeny and went out to Fox's place, and had him jerked up 'fore the gran' jury. Then, when Fox was in court and wanted to know where their proof was that he kilt his wife, w'y, Wright he jumps up and says that riddle to the judge and all the neighbers that was there. And so when they got it all studied out— w'y, they tuk old Fox out and hung him under the same tree where he buried Mrs. Fox under. And

that's all o' that'n; and the other'n—I promised—David—Mason—Jeffries—I wouldn't—never—tell—no—livin'—soul—'less—he—gimme—leef,—er—they—guessed—it—out—their—own—se'f!" And as she gave this rather ambiguous explanation of the first riddle, with the mysterious comment on the latter in conclusion, she shook her elfin tresses back over her shoulders with a cunning toss of her head and a glimmering twinkle of her pale bright eyes that somewhat reminded us of the fairy godmother in *Cinderella.*

And Mary Alice Smith was right, too, in her early prognostications regarding the visits of her Uncle Tomps and Aunt 'Lizabeth. Many times through the winter they "jest dropped in," as Aunt 'Lizabeth always expressed it, "to see how we was a-gittin' on with Mary Alice." And once, "in court week," during a prolonged trial in which Uncle Tomps and Aunt 'Lizabeth rather prominently figured, they "jest dropped in" on us and settled down and dwelt with us for the longest five days and nights we children had ever in our lives experienced. Nor was our long term of restraint from childish sports relieved wholly by their absence, since Aunt 'Lizabeth had taken Mary Alice back with them, saying that "a good long visit to her dear old home—pore as it was—would do the child good."

And then it was that we went about the house in moody silence, the question, "Where—is—Mary—Alice—Smith?" forever yearning at our lips for utterance, and the still belated echo in the old hall

overhead forever answering, "Oh—she—has—gone —home!"

It was early spring when she returned. And we were looking for her coming, and knew a week beforehand the very day she would arrive—for had not Aunt 'Lizabeth sent special word by Uncle Tomps, who "had come to town to do his millin', and git the latest war news, not to fail to jest drop in and tell us that they was layin' off to send Mary Alice in next Saturd'y."

Our little town, like every other village and metropolis throughout the country at that time, was, to the children at least, a scene of continuous holiday and carnival. The nation's heart was palpitating with the feverish pulse of war, and already the still half-frozen clods of the common highway were beaten into frosty dust by the tread of marshaled men; and the shrill shriek of the fife, and the hoarse boom and jar and rattling patter of the drums stirred every breast with something of that rapturous insanity of which true patriots and heroes can alone be made.

But on the day—when Mary Alice Smith was to return—what was all the gallant tumult of the town to us? I remember how we ran far up the street to welcome her—for afar off we had recognized her elfish face and eager eyes peering expectantly from behind the broad shoulders of a handsome fellow mounted on a great high-stepping horse that neighed and pranced excitedly as we ran scurrying toward them.

"Whoo-ee!" she cried in perfect ecstasy, as we paused in breathless admiration. "Clear—the—track — there,—old—folks — young—folks!—fer—Mary—Alice—Smith—and—David — Mason—Jeffries—is—come—to—town!"

O what a day that was! And how vain indeed would be the attempt to detail here a tithe of its glory, or our happiness in having back with us our dear little girl, and her hysterical delight in seeing us so warmly welcome to the full love of our childish hearts the great, strong, round-faced, simple-natured "David—Mason—Jeffries"! Long and long ago we had learned to love him as we loved the peasant hero of some fairy tale of Christian Andersen's; but now that he was with us in most wholesome and robust verity, our very souls seemed scampering from our bodies to run to him and be caught up and tossed and swung and dandled in his gentle giant arms.

All that long delicious morning we were with him. In his tender charge we were permitted to go down among the tumult and the music of the streets, his round good-humored face and big blue eyes lit with a luster like our own. And happy little Mary Alice Smith—how proud she was of him! And how closely and how tenderly, through all that golden morning, did the strong brown hand clasp hers! A hundred times at least, as we promenaded thus, she swung her head back jauntily to whisper to us in that old mysterious way of hers that "David—Mason—Jeffries—and—Mary—Alice

—Smith — knew — something—that—we—couldn't —guess!" But when he had returned us home, and after dinner had started down the street alone, with little Mary Alice clapping her hands after him above the gate and laughing in a strange new voice, and with the backs of her little fluttering hands vainly striving to blot out the big tear-drops that gathered in her eyes, we vaguely guessed the secret she and David kept. That night at supper-time we knew it fully. He had enlisted.

. . . . . .

Among the list of "killed" at Rich Mountain, Virginia, occurred the name of "Jeffries, David M." We kept it from her as long as we could. At last she knew.

. . . . . .

"It don't seem like no year ago to me!" Over and over she had said these words. The face was very pale and thin, and the eyes so bright—so bright! The kindly hand that smoothed away the little sufferer's hair trembled and dropped tenderly again upon the folded ones beneath the snowy spread.

"Git me out the picture again!"

The trembling hand lifted once more and searched beneath the pillow.

She drew the thin hands up, and, smiling, pressed the pictured face against her lips. "David—Mason —Jeffries," she said—"le's—me—and—you—go—play—out—on—the—stairs!"

And ever in the empty home a voice goes moaning on and on, and "Where is Mary Alice?" it cries, and "Where— is — Mary — Alice — Smith?" And the still belated echo, through the high depths of the old hall overhead, answers quaveringly back, "Oh—she—has—gone—home!" But her voice—it is silent evermore!

"Oh, where is Mary Alice Smith?" She taught us how to call her thus—and now she will not answer us! Have we no voice to reach her with? How sweet and pure and glad they were in those old days, as we recall the accents ringing through the hall—the same we vainly cry to her. Her fancies were so quaint—her ways so full of prankish mysteries! We laughed then; now, upon our knees, we wring our lifted hands and gaze, through streaming tears, high up the stairs she used to climb in childish glee, to call and answer eerily. And now, no answer anywhere!

How deft the little finger-tips in every task! The hands, how smooth and delicate to lull and soothe! And the strange music of her lips! The very crudeness of their speech made chaster yet the childish thought her guileless utterance had caught from spirit-depths beyond our reach. And so her homely name grew fair and sweet and beautiful to hear, blent with the echoes pealing clear and vibrant up the winding stair: "Where—where is Mary Alice Smith?" She taught us how to call her thus —but oh, she will not answer us! We have no voice to reach her with.

THE OLD MAN

[*Response made to the sentiment, "The Old Man," at a dinner of the Indianapolis Literary Club.*]

"You are old, Father William," the young man said,
"And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head—
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

THE OLD MAN never grows so old as to become either stale, juiceless, or unpalatable. The older he grows, the mellower and riper he becomes. His eyes may fail him, his step falter, and his big-mouthed shoes—"a world too wide for his shrunk shank"—may cluck and shuffle as he walks; his rheumatics may make great knuckles of his knees; the rusty hinges of his vertebræ may refuse cunningly to articulate, but all the same the "backbone" of the old man has been time-seasoned, tried, and tested, and no deerskin vest was ever buttoned round a tougher! Look at the eccentric kinks and curvings of it—its abrupt depression at the base, and its rounded bulging at the shoulders; but don't laugh with the smart young man who airily observes how full-chested the old man would be if his head

were only turned around, and don't kill the young man, either, until you take him out some place and tell him that the old man got himself warped up in that shape along about the time when everybody had to hump himself. Try to bring before the young man's defective mental vision a dissolving view of a "good old-fashioned barn-raisin' "—and the old man doing all the "raisin' " himself, and "grubbin'," and "burnin' " logs and "underbrush," and "dreenin' " at the same time, and trying to coax something besides calamus to grow in the spongy little tract of swamp-land that he could stand in the middle of and "wobble" and shake the whole farm. Or, if you can't recall the many salient features of the minor disadvantages under which the old man used to labor, your pliant limbs may soon overtake him, and he will smilingly tell you of trials and privations of the early days, until your anxiety about the young man just naturally stagnates, and dries up, and evaporates, and blows away.

In this little side-show of existence the old man is always worth the full price of admission. He is not only the greatest living curiosity on exhibition, but the object of the most genial solicitude and interest to the serious observer. It is even good to look upon his vast fund of afflictions, finding prominent above them all that wholesome patience that surpasseth understanding; to dwell compassionately upon his prodigality of aches and ailments, and yet, by his pride in their wholesale possession, and his thorough resignation to the inevitable, continually to

be rebuked, and in part made envious of the old man's right-of-title situation. Nature, after all, is kinder than unkind to him, and always has a compensation and a soothing balm for every blow that age may deal him. And in the fading embers of the old man's eyes there are, at times, swift flashes and rekindlings of the smiles of youth, and the old artlessness about the wrinkled face that dwelt there when his cheeks were like the pippins, and his

> "Red lips, redder still,
> Kissed by strawberries on the hill."

And thus it is the children are intuitively drawn toward him, and young, pure-faced mothers are forever hovering about him, with just such humorings and kindly ministrations as they bestow on the little emperor of the household realm, strapped in his high chair at the dinner-table, crying "Amen" in the midst of "grace," and ignoring the "substantials" of the groaning board, and at once insisting upon a square deal of the more "temporal blessings" of jelly, cake, and pie. And the old man has justly earned every distinction he enjoys. Therefore let him make your hearthstone all the brighter with the ruddy coal he drags up from it with his pipe, as he comfortably settles himself where, with reminiscent eyes, he may watch the curling smoke of his tobacco as it indolently floats, and drifts and drifts, and dips at last, and vanishes up the grateful flue. At such times, when a five-year-old, what a haven

every boy has found between the old grandfather's knees! Look back in fancy at the faces blending there—the old man's and the boy's—and, with the nimbus of the smoke-wreaths round the brows, the gilding of the firelight on cheek and chin, and the rapt and far-off gazings of the eyes of both, why, but for the silver tinsel of the beard of one and the dusky elf-locks of the other, the faces seem almost like twins.

With such a view of age, one feels like whipping up the lazy years and getting old at once. In heart and soul the old man is not old—and never will be. He is paradoxically old, and that is all. So it is that he grows younger with increasing years, until old age at worst is always at a level par with youth. Who ever saw a man so old as not secretly and most heartily to wish the veteran years upon years of greater age? And at what great age did ever any old man pass away and leave behind no sudden shock, and no selfish hearts still to yearn after him and grieve on unconsoled? Why, even in the slow declining years of old Methuselah—the banner old man of the universe,—so old that history grew absolutely tired waiting for him to go off some place and die—even Methuselah's taking off must have seemed abrupt to his immediate friends, and a blow to the general public that doubtless plunged it into the profoundest gloom. For nine hundred and sixty-nine years this durable old man had "smelt the rose above the mold," and doubtless had a thousand times been told by congratulating friends that he didn't

look a day older than nine hundred and sixty-eight; and necessarily the habit of living, with him, was hard to overcome.

In his later years what an oracle he must have been, and with what reverence his friends must have looked upon the "little, glassy-headed, hairless man," and hung upon his every utterance! And with what unerring gift of prophecy could he foretell the long and husky droughts of summer — the gracious rains, at last, — the milk-sick breeding autumn and the blighting winter, simply by the way his bones felt after a century's casual attack of inflammatory rheumatism! And, having annually frosted his feet for some odd centuries—boy and man—we can fancy with what quiet delight he was wont to practise his prognosticating facilities on "the boys," forecasting the coming of the then fledgling cyclone and the gosling blizzard, and doubtless even telling the day of the month by the way his heels itched. And with what wonderment and awe must old chronic maladies have regarded him—tackling him singly or in solid phalanx, only to drop back pantingly, at last, and slink away dumfounded and abashed! And with what brazen pride the final conquering disease must have exulted over its shameless victory! But this is pathos here, and not a place for ruthless speculation: a place for asterisks—not words. Peace! peace! The man is dead! "The fever called living is over at last." The patient slumbers. He takes

his rest. He sleeps. Come away! He is the oldest dead man in the cemetery.

Whether the hardy, stall-fed old man of the country, or the opulent and well-groomed old man of the metropolis, he is one in our esteem and the still warmer affections of the children. The old man from the country—you are always glad to see him and hear him talk. There is a breeziness of the woods and hills and a spice of the bottom-lands and thickets in everything he says, and dashes of shadow and sunshine over the waving wheat are in all the varying expressions of his swarthy face. The grip of his hand is a thing to bet on, and the undue loudness of his voice in greeting you is even lulling and melodious, since unconsciously it argues for the frankness of a nature that has nothing to conceal. Very probably you are forced to smile, meeting the old man in town, where he never seems at ease, and invariably apologizes in some way for his presence, saying, perhaps, by way of explanation: "Yes-sir, here I am, in spite o' myself. Come in day afore yisterd'y. Boys was thrashin' on the place, and the beltin' kept a-troublin' and delayin' of 'em —and I was potterin' round in the way anyhow, tel finally they sent me off to town to git some whang-luther and ribbets, and while I was in, I thought—I thought I'd jest run over and see the Jedge about that Henry County matter; and as I was knockin' round the court-house, first thing I knowed I'll be switched to death ef they didn't pop

me on the jury! And here I am, eatin' my head off up here at the tavern. Reckon, tho', the county'll stand good for my expenses. Ef hit cain't, I kin!" And, with the heartiest sort of a laugh, the old man jogs along, leaving you to smile till bedtime over the happiness he has unconsciously contributed.

Another instance of the old man's humor under trying circumstances was developed but a few days ago. This old man was a German citizen of an inundated town in the Ohio valley. There was much of the pathetic in his experience, but the bravery with which he bore his misfortunes was admirable. A year ago his little home was first invaded by the flood, and himself and wife, and his son's family, were driven from it to the hills for safety—but the old man's telling of the story can not be improved upon. It ran like this: "Last year, ven I svwim out fon dot leedle home off mine, mit my vife, unt my son, his vife unt leedle girls, I dink dot's der last time goot-by to dose proberty! But afder der vater is gone down, unt dry oop unt eberding, dere vas yet der house dere. Unt my friends dey sait, 'Dot's all you got yet.—Vell, feex oop der house—dot's someding! feex oop der house, unt you vood still hatt yet a home!' Vell, all summer I go to work, unt spent me eberding unt feex der proberty. Den I got yet a morgage on der house! Dees time here der vater come again—till I vish it vas last year vonce! Unt now all I safe is my vife, unt my son his vife, unt my leedle grandchilderns! Else everding is gone! All—everyding!—Der house gone—

unt—unt—der morgage gone, too!" And then the old Teutonic face "melted all over in sunshiny smiles," and, turning, he bent and lifted a sleepy little girl from a pile of dirty bundles in the depot waiting-room and went pacing up and down the muddy floor, saying things in German to the child. I thought the whole thing rather beautiful. That's the kind of an old man who, saying good-by to his son, would lean and kiss the young man's hand, as in the Dutch regions of Pennsylvania, two or three weeks ago, I saw an old man do.

Mark Lemon must have known intimately and loved the genteel old man of the city when the once famous domestic drama of "Grandfather Whitehead" was conceived. In the play the old man—a once prosperous merchant—finds a happy home in the household of his son-in-law. And here it is that the gentle author has drawn at once the poem, the picture, and the living proof of the old Wordsworthian axiom, "The child is father to the man." The old man, in his simple way, and in his great love for his wilful little grandchild, is being continually distracted from the grave sermons and moral lessons he would read the boy. As, for instance, aggrievedly attacking the little fellow's neglect of his books and his inordinate tendency toward idleness and play—the culprit, in the meantime, down on the floor clumsily winding his top—the old man runs on something in this wise:

"Play! play! play! Always play and no work, no study, no lessons. And here you are, the only child

of the most indulgent parents in the world—parents that, proud as they are of you, would be ten times prouder only to see you at your book, storing your mind with useful knowledge, instead of, day in, day out, frittering away your time over your toys and your tops and marbles. And even when your old grandfather tries to advise you and wants to help you, and is always ready and eager to assist you, and all—why, what's it all amount to? Coax and beg and tease and plead with you, and yet—and yet"— (Mechanically kneeling as he speaks)—"Now that's not the way to wind your top! How many more times will I have to show you!" And an instant later the old man's admonitions are entirely forgotten, and his artless nature—dull now to everything but the childish glee in which he shares—is all the sweeter and more lovable for its simplicity.

And so it is, Old Man, that you are always touching the very tenderest places in our hearts—unconsciously appealing to our warmest sympathies, and taking to yourself our purest love. We look upon your drooping figure, and we mark your tottering step and trembling hand, yet a reliant something in your face forbids compassion, and a something in your eye will not permit us to look sorrowfully on you. And, however we may smile at your quaint ways and old-school oddities of manner and of speech, our merriment is ever tempered with the gentlest reverence.

THE GILDED ROLL

NOSING around in an old box—packed away, and lost to memory for years—an hour ago I found a musty package of gilt paper, or rather, a roll it was, with the green-tarnished gold of the old sheet for the outer wrapper. I picked it up mechanically to toss it into some obscure corner, when, carelessly lifting it by one end, a child's tin whistle dropped therefrom and fell tinkling on the attic floor. It lies before me on my writing table now—and so, too, does the roll entire, though now a roll no longer,—for my eager fingers have unrolled the gilded covering, and all its precious contents are spread out beneath my hungry eyes.

Here is a scroll of ink-written music. I don't read music, but I know the dash and swing of the pen that rained it on the page. Here is a letter, with the selfsame impulse and abandon in every syllable; and its melody—however sweet the other—is far more sweet to me. And here are other letters like it—three—five—and seven, at least. Bob wrote them from the front, and Billy kept them for me when I went to join him. Dear boy! Dear boy!

Here are some cards of bristol-board. Ah! when Bob came to these there were no blotches then.

What faces—what expressions! The droll, ridiculous, good-for-nothing genius, with his "sad mouth," as he called it, "upside down," laughing always—at everything, at big rallies, and mass-meetings and conventions, county fairs, and floral halls, booths, watermelon-wagons, dancing-tents, the swing, the Daguerrean-car, the "lung-barometer," and the air-gun man. Oh! what a gifted, good-for-nothing boy Bob was in those old days! And here's a picture of a girlish face—a very faded photograph—even fresh from "the gallery," five and twenty years ago, it was a faded thing. But the living face—how bright and clear that was!—for "Doc," Bob's awful name for her, was a pretty girl, and brilliant, clever, lovable every way. No wonder Bob fancied her! And you could see some hint of her jaunty loveliness in every fairy face he drew, and you could find her happy ways and dainty tastes unconsciously assumed in all he did—the books he read—the poems he admired, and those he wrote; and, ringing clear and pure and jubilant, the vibrant beauty of her voice could clearly be defined and traced through all his music. Now, there's the happy pair of them—Bob and Doc. Make of them just whatever your good fancy may dictate, but keep in mind the stern, relentless ways of destiny.

You are not at the beginning of a novel, only at the threshold of one of a hundred experiences that lie buried in the past, and this particular one most happily resurrected by these odds and ends found in the gilded roll.

You see, dating away back, the contents of this package, mainly, were hastily gathered together after a week's visit out at the old Mills farm; the gilt paper, and the whistle, and the pictures, they were Billy's; the music pages, Bob's, or Doc's; the letters and some other manuscripts were mine.

The Mills girls were great friends of Doc's, and often came to visit her in town; and so Doc often visited the Mills's. This is the way that Bob first got out there, and won them all, and "shaped the thing" for me, as he would put it; and lastly, we had lugged in Billy,—such a handy boy, you know, to hold the horses on picnic excursions, and to watch the carriage and the luncheon, and all that.—"Yes, and," Bob would say, "such a serviceable boy in getting all the fishing tackle in proper order, and digging bait, and promenading in our wake up and down the creek all day, with the minnow-bucket hanging on his arm, don't you know!"

But jolly as the days were, I think jollier were the long evenings at the farm. After the supper in the grove, where, when the weather permitted, always stood the table ankle-deep in the cool green plush of the sward; and after the lounge upon the grass, and the cigars, and the new fish stories, and the general invoice of the old ones, it was delectable to get back to the girls again, and in the old "best room" hear once more the lilt of the old songs and the staccatoed laughter of the piano mingling with the alto and falsetto voices of the Mills girls, and the gallant soprano of the dear girl Doc.

This is the scene I want you to look in upon, as, in fancy, I do now—and here are the materials for it all, husked from the gilded roll:

Bob, the master, leans at the piano now, and Doc is at the keys, her glad face often thrown up sidewise toward his own. His face is boyish—for there is yet but the ghost of a mustache upon his lip. His eyes are dark and clear, of over-size when looking at you, but now their lids are drooped above his violin, whose melody has, for the time, almost smoothed away the upward kinkings of the corners of his mouth. And wonderfully quiet now is every one, and the chords of the piano, too, are low and faltering; and so, at last, the tune itself swoons into the universal hush, and—Bob is rasping, in its stead, the ridiculous, but marvelously perfect imitation of the "priming" of a pump, while Billy's hands forget the "chiggers" on the bare backs of his feet, as, with clapping palms, he dances round the room in ungovernable spasms of delight. And then we all laugh; and Billy, taking advantage of the general tumult, pulls Bob's head down and whispers, "Git 'em to stay up 'way late to-night!" And Bob, perhaps remembering that we go back home to-morrow, winks at the little fellow and whispers, "You let me manage 'em! Stay up till broad daylight if we take a notion—eh?" And Billy dances off again in newer glee, while the inspired musician is plunking a banjo imitation on his enchanted instrument, which is unceremoniously

drowned out by a circus-tune from Doc that is absolutely inspiring to every one but the barefooted brother, who drops back listlessly to his old position on the floor and sullenly renews operations on his "chigger" claims.

"Thought you was goin' to have pop-corn to-night all so fast!" he says, doggedly, in the midst of a momentary lull that has fallen on a game of whist. And then the oldest Mills girl, who thinks cards stupid anyhow, says: "That's so, Billy; and we're going to have it, too; and right away, for this game's just ending, and I shan't submit to being bored with another. I say 'pop-corn' with Billy! And after that," she continues, rising and addressing the party in general, "we must have another literary and artistic tournament, and that's been in contemplation and preparation long enough; so you gentlemen can be pulling your wits together for the exercises, while us girls see to the refreshments."

"Have you done anything toward it!" queries Bob, when the girls are gone, with the alert Billy in their wake.

"Just an outline," I reply. "How with you?"

"Clean forgot it—that is, the preparation; but I've got a little old second-hand idea, if you'll all help me out with it, that'll amuse us some, and tickle Billy, I'm certain."

So that's agreed upon; and while Bob produces his portfolio, drawing paper, pencils and so on, I turn to my note-book in a dazed way and begin

counting my fingers in a depth of profound abstraction, from which I am barely aroused by the reappearance of the girls and Billy.

"Goody, goody, goody! Bob's goin' to make pictures!" cries Billy, in additional transport to that the cake pop-corn had produced.

"Now, you girls," says Bob, gently detaching the affectionate Billy from one leg and moving a chair to the table, with a backward glance of intelligence toward the boy,—"you girls are to help us all you can, and we can all work; but, as I'll have all the illustrations to do, I want you to do as many of the verses as you can—that'll be easy, you know,—because the work entire is just to consist of a series of fool-epigrams, such as, for instance,—listen, Billy:

> Here lies a young man
> Who in childhood began
> To swear, and to smoke, and to drink,—
> In his twentieth year
> He quit swearing and beer,
> And yet is still smoking, I think."

And the rest of his instructions are delivered in lower tones, that the boy may not hear; and then, all matters seemingly arranged, he turns to the boy with —"And now, Billy, no lookin' over shoulders, you know, or swinging on my chair-back while I'm at work. When the pictures are all finished, then you can take a squint at 'em, and not before. Is that all hunky, now?"

"Oh! who's a-goin' to look over your shoulder—only *Doc*." And as the radiant Doc hastily quits

that very post, and dives for the offending brother, he scrambles under the piano and laughs derisively.

And then a silence falls upon the group—a gracious quiet, only intruded upon by the very juicy and exuberant munching of an apple from a remote fastness of the room, and the occasional thumping of a bare heel against the floor.

At last I close my note-book with a half slam.

"That means," says Bob, laying down his pencil, and addressing the girls,—"that means he's concluded his poem, and that he's not pleased with it in any manner, and that he intends declining to read it, for that self-acknowledged reason, and that he expects us to believe every affected word of his entire speech—"

"Oh, don't!" I exclaim.

"Then give us the wretched production, in all its hideous deformity!"

And the girls all laugh so sympathetically, and Bob joins them so gently, and yet with a tone, I know, that can be changed so quickly to my further discomfiture, that I arise at once and read, without apology or excuse, this primitive and very callow poem recovered here to-day from the gilded roll:

A BACKWARD LOOK

As I sat smoking, alone, yesterday,
And lazily leaning back in my chair,
Enjoying myself in a general way—
Allowing my thoughts a holiday
From weariness, toil and care,—

"As I sat smoking, alone, yesterday,
And lazily leaning back in my chair"

My fancies—doubtless, for ventilation—
  Left ajar the gates of my mind,—
And Memory, seeing the situation,
  Slipped out in the street of "Auld Lang Syne"—

Wandering ever with tireless feet
  Through scenes of silence, and jubilee
Of long-hushed voices; and faces sweet
Were thronging the shadowy side of the street
  As far as the eye could see;
Dreaming again, in anticipation,
  The same old dreams of our boyhood's days
That never come true, from the vague sensation
  Of walking asleep in the world's strange ways.

Away to the house where I was born!
  And there was the selfsame clock that ticked
From the close of dusk to the burst of morn,
When life-warm hands plucked the golden corn
  And helped when the apples were picked.
And the "chany dog" on the mantel-shelf,
  With the gilded collar and yellow eyes,
Looked just as at first, when I hugged myself
  Sound asleep with the dear surprise.

And down to the swing in the locust-tree,
  Where the grass was worn from the trampled ground,
And where "Eck" Skinner, "Old" Carr, and three
Or four such other boys used to be
  Doin' "sky-scrapers," or "whirlin' round":
And again Bob climbed for the bluebird's nest,
  And again "had shows" in the buggy-shed
Of Guymon's barn, where still, unguessed,
  The old ghosts romp through the best days dead!

And again I gazed from the old schoolroom
  With a wistful look, of a long June day,
When on my cheek was the hectic bloom

Caught of Mischief, as I presume—
  He had such a "partial" way,
It seemed, toward me.—And again I thought
  Of a probable likelihood to be
Kept in after school—for a girl was caught
  Catching a note from me.

And down through the woods to the swimming-hole—
  Where the big, white, hollow, old sycamore grows,—
And we never cared when the water was cold,
And always "ducked" the boy that told
  On the fellow that tied the clothes.—
When life went so like a dreamy rhyme,
  That it seems to me now that then
The world was having a jollier time
  Than it ever will have again.

The crude production is received, I am glad to note, with some expressions of favor from the company though Bob, of course, must heartlessly dissipate my weak delight by saying, "Well, it's certainly bad enough; though," he goes on with an air of deepest critical sagacity and fairness, "considered, as it should be, justly, as the production of a jour.-poet, why, it might be worse—that is, a little worse."

"Probably," I remember saying,—"probably I might redeem myself by reading you this little amateurish bit of verse, enclosed to me in a letter by mistake, not very long ago." I here fish an envelope from my pocket, the address of which all recognize as in Bob's almost printed writing. He smiles vacantly at it—then vividly colors.

"What date?" he stoically asks.

"The date," I suggestively answer, "of your last letter to our dear Doc, at boarding-school, two days exactly in advance of her coming home—this veritable visit now."

Both Bob and Doc rush at me—but too late. The letter and contents have wholly vanished. The youngest Miss Mills quiets us—urgently distracting us, in fact, by calling our attention to the immediate completion of our joint production; "For now," she says, "with our new reinforcement, we can, with becoming diligence, soon have it ready for both printer and engraver, and then we'll wake up the boy (who has been fortunately slumbering for the last quarter of an hour), and present to him, as designed and intended, this matchless creation of our united intellects." At the conclusion of this speech we all go good-humoredly to work, and at the close of half an hour the tedious, but most ridiculous, task is announced completed.

As I arrange and place in proper form here on the table the separate cards—twenty-seven in number—I sigh to think that I am unable to transcribe for you the best part of the nonsensical work—the illustrations. All I can give is the written copy of—

BILLY'S ALPHABETICAL ANIMAL SHOW

A was an elegant Ape
Who tied up his ears with red tape,
And wore a long veil
Half revealing his tail
Which was trimmed with jet bugles and crape.

B was a boastful old Bear
Who used to say,—"Hoomh! I declare
I can eat—if you'll get me
The children, and let me—
Ten babies, teeth, toe-nails and hair!"

C was a Codfish who sighed
When snatched from the home of his pride,
But could he, embrined,
Guess this fragrance behind,
How glad he would be to have died!

D was a dandified Dog
Who said,—"Though it's raining like fog
I wear no umbrellah,
Me boy, for a fellah
Might just as well travel incog!"

E was an elderly Eel
Who would say,—"Well, I really feel—
As my grandchildren wriggle
And shout 'I should giggle'—
A trifle run down at the heel!"

F was a Fowl who conceded
Some hens might hatch more eggs than *she* did,—
But she'd children as plenty
As eighteen or twenty,
And that was quite all that she needed.

G was a gluttonous Goat
Who, dining one day, *table d'hôte*,
Ordered soup-bone, *au fait*,
And fish, *papier-mâché*,
And a *filet* of Spring overcoat.

H was a high-cultured Hound
Who could clear forty feet at a bound,
And a coon once averred
That his howl could be heard
For five miles and three-quarters around.

I was an Ibex ambitious
To dive over chasms auspicious;
He would leap down a peak
And not light for a week,
And swear that the jump was delicious.

J was a Jackass who said
He had such a bad cold in his head,
If it wasn't for leaving
The rest of us grieving,
He'd really rather be dead.

K was a profligate Kite
Who would haunt the saloons every night;
And often he ust
To reel back to his roost
Too full to set up on it right.

L was a wary old Lynx
Who would say,—"Do you know wot I thinks?—
I thinks ef you happen
To ketch me a-nappin'
I'm ready to set up the drinks!"

M was a merry old Mole,
Who would snooze all the day in his hole,
Then—all night, a-rootin'
Around and galootin'—
He'd sing "Johnny, Fill up the Bowl!"

N was a caustical Nautilus
Who sneered, "I suppose, when they've *caught* all us,
Like oysters they'll serve us,
And can us, preserve us,
And barrel, and pickle, and bottle us!"

O was an autocrat Owl—
Such a wise—such a wonderful fowl!
Why, for all the night through
He would hoot and hoo-hoo,
And hoot and hoo-hooter and howl!

P was a Pelican pet,
Who gobbled up all he could get;
He could eat on until
He was full to the bill,
And there he had lodgings to let!

Q was a querulous Quail,
Who said: "It will little avail
The efforts of those
Of my foes who propose
To attempt to put salt on my tail!"

R was a ring-tailed Raccoon,
With eyes of the tinge of the moon,
And his nose a blue-black,
And the fur on his back
A sad sort of sallow maroon.

S is a Sculpin—you'll wish
Very much to have one on your dish,
Since all his bones grow
On the outside, and so
He's a very desirable fish.

T was a Turtle, of wealth,
Who went round with particular stealth,
"Why," said he, "I'm afraid
Of being waylaid
When I even walk out for my health!"

U was a Unicorn curious,
With one horn, of a growth so *luxurious,*
He could level and stab it—
If you didn't grab it—
Clean through you, he was so blamed furious!

V was a vagabond Vulture
Who said: "I don't want to insult yer,
But when you intrude
Where in lone solitude
I'm a-preyin', you're no man o' culture!"

W was a wild *Wood*chuck,
And you just bet that he *could* "chuck"—
He'd eat raw potatoes,
Green corn, and tomatoes,
And tree roots, and call it all "*good* chuck!"

X was a kind of X-cuse
Of some-sort-o'-thing that got loose
Before we could name it,
And cage it, and tame it,
And bring it in general use.

Y is the Yellowbird,—bright
As a petrified lump of starlight,
Or a handful of lightning-
Bugs, squeezed in the tight'ning
Pink fist of a boy, at night.

Z is the Zebra, of course!—
A kind of a clown-of-a-horse,—
Each other despising,
Yet neither devising
A way to obtain a divorce!

& here is the famous—what-is-it?
Walk up, Master Billy, and quiz it:
You've seen the *rest* of 'em—
Ain't this the *best* of 'em,
Right at the end of your visit?

At last Billy is sent off to bed. It is the prudent mandate of the old folks: But so loathfully the poor child goes, Bob's heart goes, too.—Yes, Bob himself, to keep the little fellow company for a while, and, up there under the old rafters, in the pleasant gloom, lull him to famous dreams with fairy tales. And it is during this brief absence that the youngest Mills girl gives us a surprise. She will read a poem, she says, written by a very dear friend of hers who, fortunately for us, is not present to prevent her. We guard door and window as she reads. Doc says she will not listen; but she does listen, and cries, too—out of pure vexation, she asserts. The rest of us, however, cry just because of the apparent honesty of the poem of—

BEAUTIFUL HANDS

O your hands—they are strangely fair!
Fair—for the jewels that sparkle there,—
Fair—for the witchery of the spell
That ivory keys alone can tell;

But when their delicate touches rest
Here in my own do I love them best,
As I clasp with eager, acquisitive spans
My glorious treasure of beautiful hands!

Marvelous—wonderful—beautiful hands!
They can coax roses to bloom in the strands
Of your brown tresses; and ribbons will twine,
Under mysterious touches of thine,
Into such knots as entangle the soul
And fetter the heart under such a control
As only the strength of my love understands—
My passionate love for your beautiful hands.

As I remember the first fair touch
Of those beautiful hands that I love so much,
I seem to thrill as I then was thrilled,
Kissing the glove that I found unfilled—
When I met your gaze, and the queenly bow
As you said to me, laughingly, "Keep it now!" . . .
And dazed and alone in a dream I stand,
Kissing this ghost of your beautiful hand.

When first I loved, in the long ago,
And held your hand as I told you so—
Pressed and caressed it and gave it a kiss
And said "I could die for a hand like this!"
Little I dreamed love's fullness yet
Had to ripen when eyes were wet
And prayers were vain in their wild demands
For one warm touch of your beautiful hands.

Beautiful Hands!—O Beautiful Hands!
Could you reach out of the alien lands
Where you are lingering, and give me, to-night,
Only a touch—were it ever so light—

My heart were soothed, and my weary brain
Would lull itself into rest again;
For there is no solace the world commands
Like the caress of your beautiful hands.

. . . . . .

Violently winking at the mist that blurs my sight, I regretfully awaken to the here and now. And is it possible, I sorrowfully muse, that all this glory can have fled away?—that more than twenty long, long years are spread between me and that happy night? And is it possible that all the dear old faces —Oh, quit it! quit it! Gather the old scraps up and wad 'em back into oblivion, where they belong!

Yes, but be calm—be calm! Think of cheerful things. You are not all alone. *Billy's* living yet.

I know—and six feet high—and sag-shouldered—and owns a tin and stove-store, and can't hear thunder! *Billy!*

And the youngest Mills girl—she's alive, too.

S'pose I don't know that? I married her!

And Doc.—

Bob married her. Been in California for more than fifteen years—on some blasted cattle-ranch, or something,—and he's worth a half a million! And am I less prosperous with this gilded roll?

A WILD IRISHMAN

NOT very many years ago the writer was for some months stationed at South Bend, a thriving little city of northern Indiana. Its population is mainly on the one side of the St. Joseph River, but quite a respectable fraction thereof takes its industrial way to the opposite shore, and there gains an audience and a hearing in the rather imposing growth and hurly-burly of its big manufactories, and the consequent rapid appearance of multitudinous neat cottages, tenement houses and business blocks. A stranger entering South Bend proper on any ordinary day, will be at some loss to account for its prosperous appearance—its flagged and bouldered streets—its handsome mercantile blocks, banks, and business houses generally. Reasoning from cause to effect, and seeing but a meager sprinkling of people on the streets throughout the day, and these seeming, for the most part, merely idlers, and in nowise accessory to the evident thrift and opulence of their surroundings, the observant stranger will be puzzled at the situation. But when evening comes, and the outlying foundries, sewing-machine, wagon, plow, and other "works," together with the paper-mills

and all the nameless industries—when the operations of all these are suspended for the day, and the workmen and workwomen loosed from labor—then, as this vast army suddenly invades and overflows bridge, roadway, street and lane, the startled stranger will fully comprehend the why and wherefore of the city's high prosperity. And, once acquainted with the people there, the fortunate sojourner will find no ordinary culture and intelligence, and, as certainly, he will meet with a social spirit and a whole-souled heartiness that will make the place a lasting memory. The town, too, is the home of many world-known people, and a host of local celebrities, the chief of which latter class I found, during my stay there, in the person of Tommy Stafford, or "The Wild Irishman" as everybody called him.

"Talk of odd fellows and eccentric characters," said Major Blowney, my employer, one afternoon, "you must see our 'Wild Irishman' here before you say you've yet found the queerest, brightest, cleverest chap in all your travels. What d'ye say, Stockford?" And the Major paused in his work of charging cartridges for his new breech-loading shotgun and turned to await his partner's response.

Stockford, thus addressed, paused above the shield-sign he was lettering, slowly smiling as he dipped and trailed his pencil through the ivory black upon a bit of broken glass and said, in his deliberate, half absent-minded way,—"Is it Tommy you're telling him about?" and then, with a gradual broaden-

ing of the smile, he went on, "Well, I should say so. Tommy! What's come of the fellow, anyway? I haven't seen him since his last bout with the mayor, on his trial for shakin' up that fast-horse man."

"The fast-horse man got just exactly what he needed, too," said the genial Major, laughing, and mopping his perspiring brow. "The fellow was barkin' up the wrong stump when he tackled Tommy! Got beat in the trade, at his own game, you know, and wound up by an insult that no Irishman would take; and Tommy just naturally wore out the hall carpet of the old hotel with him!"

"And then collared and led him to the mayor's office himself, they say!"

"Oh, he did!" said the Major, with a dash of pride in the confirmation; "that's Tommy all over!"

"Funny trial, wasn't it?" continued the ruminating Stockford.

"Wasn't it though?" laughed the Major. "The porter's testimony: You see, he was for Tommy, of course, and on examination testified that the horseman struck Tommy first. And here Tommy broke in with: 'He's a-meanin' well, yer Honor, but he's lyin' to ye—he's lyin' to ye. No livin' man iver struck me first—nor last, nayther, for the matter o' that!' And I thought—the—court—would—die!" continued the Major, in a like imminent state of merriment.

"Yes, and he said if he struck him first," supplemented Stockford, "he'd like to know why the horseman was 'wearin' all the black eyes, and the

blood, and the boomps on that head of um!' And it's that talk that got him off with so light a fine!"

"As it always does," said the Major, coming to himself abruptly and looking at his watch. "Stock, you say you're not going along with our duck-shooting party this time? The old Kankakee is just lousy with 'em this season!"

"Can't go possibly," said Stockford, "not on account of the work at all, but the folks ain't just as well as I'd like to see them, and I'll stay here till they're better. Next time I'll try and be ready for you. Going to take Tommy, of course?"

"Of course! Got to have 'The Wild Irishman' with us! I'm going around to find him now." Then turning to me the Major continued, "Suppose you get on your coat and hat and come along? It's the best chance you'll ever have to meet Tommy. It's late anyhow, and Stockford'll get along without you. Come on."

"Certainly," said Stockford; "go ahead. And you can take him ducking, too, if he wants to go."

"But he doesn't want to go—and won't go," replied the Major with a commiserative glance at me. "Says he doesn't know a duck from a poll-parrot—nor how to load a shotgun—and couldn't hit a house if he were inside of it and the door shut. Admits that he nearly killed his uncle once, on the other side of a tree, with a squirrel runnin' down it. Don't want him along!"

When I reached the street with the genial Major, he gave me this advice: "Now, when you meet Tom-

my, you mustn't take all he says for dead earnest, and you mustn't believe, because he talks loud, and in italics every other word, that he wants to do all the talking and won't be interfered with. That's the way he's apt to strike folks at first—but it's their mistake, not his. Talk back to him—controvert him whenever he's aggressive in the utterance of his opinions, and if you're only honest in the announcement of your own ideas and beliefs, he'll like you all the better for standing by them. He's quick-tempered, and perhaps a trifle sensitive, so share your greater patience with him, and he'll pay you back by fighting for you at the drop of the hat. In short, he's as nearly typical of his gallant country's brave, impetuous, fun-loving race as one man can be."

"But is he quarrelsome?" I asked.

"Not at all. There's the trouble. If he'd only quarrel there'd be no harm done. Quarreling's cheap, and Tommy's extravagant. A big blacksmith here, the other day, kicked some boy out of his shop, and Tommy, on his cart, happened to be passing at the time; and he just jumped off without a word, and went in and worked on that fellow for about three minutes, with such disastrous results that they couldn't tell his shop from a slaughter-house; paid an assault and battery fine, and gave the boy a dollar besides, and the whole thing was a positive luxury to him. But I guess we'd better drop the subject, for here's his cart, and here's Tommy. Hi! there, you 'Fardown' Irish Mick!" called the Major,

in affected antipathy, "been out raiding the honest farmers' hen-roosts again, have you?"

We had halted at a corner grocery and produce store, as I took it, and the smooth-faced, shaven-headed man in woolen shirt, short vest, and suspenderless trousers so boisterously addressed by the Major, was just lifting from the back of his cart a coop of cackling chickens.

"Arrah! ye blasted Kerryonian!" replied the handsome fellow, depositing the coop on the curb and straightening his tall, slender figure; "I were jist thinkin' of yez and the ducks, and here ye come quackin' into the prisence of r'yalty, wid yer canvas-back suit upon ye and the schwim-skins bechuxt yer toes! How air yez, anyhow—and air we startin' for the Kankakee by the nixt post?"

"We're to start just as soon as we get the boys together," said the Major, shaking hands. "The crowd's to be at Andrews' by four, and it's fully that now; so come on at once. We'll go 'round by Munson's and have Hi send a boy to look after your horse. Come; I want to introduce my friend here to you, and we'll all want to smoke and jabber a little in appropriate seclusion. Come on." And the impatient Major had linked arms with his hesitating ally and myself, and was turning the corner of the street.

"It's an hour's work I have yet wid the squawkers," mildly protested Tommy, still hanging back and stepping a trifle high; "but, as one Irishman

would say til another, 'Ye're wrong, but I'm wid ye!' "

And five minutes later the three of us had joined a very jolly party in a snug back room, with

> "The chamber walls depicted all around
> With portraitures of huntsman, hawk, and hound,
> And the hurt deer;"

and where, as well, drifted over the olfactory intelligence a certain subtle, warm-breathed aroma, that genially combated the chill and darkness of the day without, and, resurrecting long-dead Christmases, brimmed the grateful memory with all comfortable cheer.

A dozen hearty voices greeted the appearance of Tommy and the Major, the latter adroitly pushing the jovial Irishman to the front, with a mock-heroic introduction to the general company, at the conclusion of which Tommy, with his hat tucked under his left elbow, stood bowing with a grace of pose and presence Lord Chesterfield might have applauded.

"Gintlemen," said Tommy, settling back upon his heels and admiringly contemplating the group; "gintlemen, I congratu-late yez wid a pride that shoves the thumbs o' me into the arrum-holes of me weshkit! At the inshtigation of the bowld *O'*Blowney—axin' the gintleman's pardon—I am here wid no silver tongue of illoquence to para-lyze yez, but I am prisent, as has been ripresinted, to jine wid yez

in a stupendous waste of gunpowder, and duck-shot, and 'high-wines,' and ham sandwiches, upon the silvonian banks of the ragin' Kankakee, where the 'di-dipper' tips ye good-by wid his tail, and the wild loon skoots like a sky-rocket for his exiled home in the alien dunes of the wild morass—or, as Tommy Moore so illegantly describes the blashted birrud,—

> 'Away to the dizhmal shwamp he spheeds—
> His path is rugged and sore,
> Through tangled juniper, beds of reeds,
> And many a fen where the serpent feeds,
> *And birrud niver flew before—*
> *And niver will fly any more'*

if iver he arrives back safe into civilization again—and I've been in the poultry business long enough to know the private opinion and personal integrity of ivery fowl that flies the air or roosts on poles. But, changin' the subject of my few small remarks here, and thankin' yez wid an overflowin' heart but a dhry tongue, I have the honor to propose, gintlemen, long life and health to ivery mother's son o' yez, and success to the 'Duck-hunters of Kankakee.' "

"The duck-hunters of the Kankakee!" chorused the elated party in such musical uproar that for a full minute the voice of the enthusiastic Major—who was trying to say something—could not be heard. Then he said:

"I want to propose that theme—'The Duck-hunt-

ers of the Kankakee', for one of Tommy's improvisations. I move we have a song now from Tommy on 'The Duck Hunters of the Kankakee.'"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! A song from Tommy," cried the crowd. "Make us up a song, and put us all into it! A song from Tommy! A song! A song!"

There was a queer light in the eye of the Irishman. I observed him narrowly—expectantly. Often I had read of this phenomenal art of improvised ballad-singing, but had always remained a little skeptical in regard to the possibility of such a feat. Even in the notable instances of this gift as displayed by the very clever Theodore Hook, I had always half suspected some prior preparation—some adroit forecasting of the sequence that seemed the instant inspiration of his witty verses. Here was evidently to be a test example, and I was all alert to mark its minutest detail.

The clamor had subsided, and Tommy had drawn a chair near to and directly fronting the Major's. His right hand was extended, closely grasping the right hand of his friend which he scarce perceptibly, though measuredly, lifted and let fall throughout the length of all the curious performance. The voice was not unmusical, nor was the quaint old ballad-air adopted by the singer unlovely in the least; simply a monotony was evident that accorded with the levity and chance-finish of the improvisation—and that the song was improvised on the instant I am certain—though in nowise remarkable, for other reasons, in rhythmic worth or finish. And while his

smiling auditors all drew nearer, and leant, with parted lips to catch every syllable, the words of the strange melody trailed unhesitatingly into the lines literally, as here subjoined:

"One gloomy day in the airly Fall,
Whin the sunshine had no chance at all—
No chance at all for to gleam and shine
And lighten up this heart of mine:

"'Twas in South Bend, that famous town,
Whilst I were a-strollin' round and round,
I met some friends and they says to me:
'It's a hunt we'll take on the Kankakee!'"

"Hurrah for the Kankakee! Give it to us, Tommy!" cried an enthusiastic voice between verses. "Now give it to the Major!" And the song went on:—

"There's Major Blowney leads the van,
As crack a shot as an Irishman,—
For it's the duck is a tin decoy
That his owld shotgun can't destroy:"

And a half-dozen jubilant palms patted the Major's shoulders, and his ruddy, good-natured face beamed with delight. "Now give it to the rest of 'em, Tommy!" chuckled the Major. And the song continued:—

"And along wid 'Hank' is Mick Maharr,
And Barney Pince, at 'The Shamrock' bar—
There's Barney Pinch, wid his heart so true;
And the Andrews Brothers they'll go too."

"Hold on, Tommy!" chipped in one of the Andrews; "you must give 'the Andrews Brothers' a better advertisement than that! Turn us on a full verse, can't you?"

"Make 'em pay for it if you do!" said the Major in an undertone. And Tommy promptly amended:—

> "O, the Andrews Brothers, they'll be there,
> Wid good se-gyars and wine to sphare,—
> They'll treat us here on fine champagne,
> And whin we're there they'll treat us again."

The applause here was vociferous, and only discontinued when a box of Havanas stood open on the table. During the momentary lull thus occasioned, I caught the Major's twinkling eyes glancing evasively toward me, as he leaned whispering some further instructions to Tommy, who again took up his desultory ballad, while I turned and fled for the street, catching, however, as I went, and high above the laughter of the crowd, the satire of this quatrain to its latest line:—

> "But R-R-Riley he'll not go, I guess,
> Lest he'd get lost in the wil-der-ness,
> And so in the city he will shtop
> For to curl his hair in the barber shop."

It was after six when I reached the hotel, but I had my hair trimmed before I went in to supper. The style of trimming adopted then I still rigidly

adhere to, and call it "the Tommy Stafford stubble-crop."

Ten days passed before I again saw the Major. Immediately upon his return—it was late afternoon when I heard of it—I determined to take my evening walk out the long street toward his pleasant home and call on him there. This I did, and found him in a wholesome state of fatigue, slippers and easy chair, enjoying his pipe on the piazza. Of course, he was overflowing with happy reminiscences of the hunt—the wood-and-water-craft—boats—ambushes—decoys, and tramp, and camp, and so on, without end;—but I wanted to hear him talk of "The Wild Irishman"—Tommy; and I think, too, now, that the sagacious Major secretly read my desires all the time. To be utterly frank with the reader I will admit that I not only think the Major divined my interest in Tommy, but I know he did; for at last, as though reading my very thoughts, he abruptly said, after a long pause, in which he knocked the ashes from his pipe and refilled and lighted it:—"Well, all I know of 'The Wild Irishman' I can tell you in a very few words—that is, if you care at all to listen?" And the crafty old Major seemed to hesitate.

"Go on—go on!" I said eagerly.

"About forty years ago," resumed the Major placidly, "in the little, old, unheard-of town Karnteel, County Tyrone, Province Ulster, Ireland, Tommy Stafford was fortunate enough—despite the contrary opinion on that point of his wretchedly

poor parents—to be born. And here, again, as I advised you the other day, you must be prepared for constant surprises in the study of Tommy's character."

"Go on," I said; "I'm prepared for anything."

The Major smiled profoundly and continued:—

"Fifteen years ago, when he came to America—and the Lord only knows how he got the passage-money—he brought his widowed mother with him here, and has supported, and is still supporting her. Besides," went on the still secretly smiling Major, "the fellow has actually found time, through all his adversities, to pick up quite a smattering of education, here and there—"

"Poor fellow!" I broke in sympathizingly, "what a pity it is that he couldn't have had such advantages earlier in life," and as I recalled the broad brogue of the fellow, together with his careless dress, recognizing beneath it all the native talent and brilliancy of a mind of most uncommon worth, I could not restrain a deep sigh of compassion and regret.

The Major was leaning forward in the gathering dusk, and evidently studying my own face, the expression of which, at that moment, was very grave and solemn, I am sure. He suddenly threw himself backward in his chair, in an uncontrollable burst of laughter. "Oh, I just can't keep it up any longer," he exclaimed.

"Keep what up?" I queried, in a perfect maze of bewilderment and surprise. "Keep what up?" I repeated.

"Why, all this twaddle, farce, travesty and by-play regarding Tommy! You know I warned you, over and over, and you mustn't blame me for the deception. I never thought you'd take it so in earnest!" and here the jovial Major again went into convulsions of laughter.

"But I don't understand a word of it all," I cried, half frenzied with the gnarl and tangle of the whole affair. "What 'twaddle, farce and by-play,' is it, anyhow?" And in my vexation, I found myself on my feet and striding nervously up and down the paved walk that joined the street with the piazza, pausing at last and confronting the Major almost petulantly. "Please explain," I said, controlling my vexation with an effort.

The Major arose. "Your striding up and down there reminds me that a little stroll on the street might do us both good," he said. "Will you wait until I get a coat and hat?"

He rejoined me a moment later, and we passed through the open gate; and saying, "Let's go down this way," he took my arm and turned into a street, where, cooling as the dusk was, the thick maples lining the walk seemed to throw a special shade of tranquillity upon us.

"What I meant was"—began the Major in a low serious voice,—"What I meant was—simply this: Our friend Tommy, though the truest Irishman in the world, is a man quite the opposite every way of the character he has appeared to you. All that rich brogue of his is assumed. Though he was poor, as I

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told you, when he came here, his native quickness, and his marvelous resources, tact, judgment, business qualities—all have helped him to the equivalent of a liberal education. His love of the humorous and the ridiculous is unbounded; but he has serious moments, as well, and at such times is as dignified and refined in speech and manner as any man you'd find in a thousand. He is a good speaker, can stir a political convention to highest excitement when he gets fired up; and can write an article for the press that goes spang to the spot. He gets into a great many personal encounters of a rather undignified character; but they are almost invariably bred of his innate interest in the 'under dog,' and the fire and tow of his impetuous nature."

My companion had paused here, and was looking through some printed slips in his pocketbook. "I wanted you to see some of the fellow's articles in print, but I have nothing of importance here—only some of his 'doggerel,' as he calls it, and you've had a sample of that. But here's a bit of the upper spirit of the man—and still another that you should hear him recite. You can keep them both if you care to. The boys all fell in love with that last one, particularly, hearing his rendition of it. So we had a lot printed, and I have two or three left. Put these two in your pocket and read them at your leisure."

But I read them there and then, as eagerly, too, as I append them here and now. The first is called—

SAYS HE

"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be,
It's plaze, if ye will, an' I'll say me say,—
Supposin' to-day was the winterest day,
Wud the weather be changing because ye cried,
Or the snow be grass were ye crucified?
The best is to make your own summer," says he,
"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be!

"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be,
It's the songs ye sing, an' the smiles ye wear,
That's a-makin' the sun shine everywhere;
An' the world of gloom is a world of glee,
Wid the bird in the bush, an' the bud in the tree,
An' the fruit on the stim of the bough," says he,
"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be!

"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be,
Ye can bring the Spring, wid its green an' gold,
An' the grass in the grove where the snow lies cold;
An' ye'll warm yer back, wid a smiling face,
As ye sit at yer heart, like an owld fireplace,
An' toast the toes o' yer sowl," says he,
"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be!"

"Now," said the Major, peering eagerly above my shoulder, "go on with the next. To my mind, it is even better than the first. A type of character you'll

recognize.—The same 'broth of a boy,' only *Americanized*, don't you know."

And I read the scrap entitled—

CHAIRLEY BURKE

It's Chairley Burke's in town, b'ys! He's down til "Jamesy's Place,"
Wid a bran'-new shave upon 'um, an' the fhwhuskers aff his face;
He's quit the Section-Gang last night, and yez can chalk it down
There's goin' to be the divil's toime, sence Chairley Burke's in town.

It's treatin' iv'ry b'y he is, an' poundin' on the bar
Till iv'ry man he's drinkin' wid must shmoke a foine cigar;
An' Missus Murphy's little Kate, that's coomin' there for beer,
Can't pay wan cint the bucketful, the whilst that Chairley's here!

He's joompin' oor the tops o' sthools, the both forninst an' back!
He'll lave yez pick the blessed flure, an' walk the straightest crack!
He's liftin' barrels wid his teeth, and singin' "Garry Owen,"
Till all the house be strikin' hands, sence Chairley Burke's in town.

The Road-Yaird hands coomes dhroppin' in, an' niver goin' back;
An' there's two freights upon the switch—the wan on aither track—
An' Mr. Gearry, from The Shops, he's mad enough to swear,
An' durstn't spake a word but grin, the whilst that Chairley's there!

Och! Chairley! Chairley! Chairley Burke! ye divil, wid yer ways
O' dhrivin' all the throubles aff, these dhark an' ghloomy days!
Ohone! that it's meself, wid all the graifs I have to dhrown,
Must lave me pick to resht a bit, sence Chairley Burke's in town.

"Before we turn back, now," said the smiling Major, as I stood lingering over the indefinable humor of the last refrain, "before we turn back I want to show you something eminently characteristic. Come this way a half-dozen steps."

As he spoke I looked up, first to observe that we had paused before a handsome square brick residence, centering a beautiful smooth lawn, its emerald only littered with the light gold of the earliest autumn leaves. On either side of the trim walk that led up from the gate to the carved stone balusters of the broad piazza, with its empty easy chairs, were graceful vases, frothing over with late blossoms, and wreathed with laurel-looking vines; and, luxuriantly lacing the border of the pave that turned the farther corner of the house, blue, white and crimson, pink and violet, went fading away in perspective as my gaze followed the gesture of the Major's.

"Here, come a little farther. Now do you see that man there?"

Yes, I could make out a figure in the deepening dusk—the figure of a man on the back stoop—a tired-looking man, in his shirt-sleeves, who sat upon

a low chair—no, not a chair—an empty box. He was leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, and the hands dropped limp. He was smoking, too, I could barely see his pipe, and but for the odor of very strong tobacco, would not have known he had a pipe. Why does the master of the house permit his servants so to desecrate this beautiful home? I thought.

"Well, shall we go now?" said the Major.

I turned silently and we retraced our steps. I think neither of us spoke for the distance of a square.

"Guess you didn't know the man there on the back porch?" said the Major.

"No; why?" I asked dubiously.

"I hardly thought you would, and besides the poor fellow's tired, and it was best not to disturb him," said the Major.

"Why; who was it—some one I know?"

"It was Tommy."

"Oh," said I inquiringly, "he's employed there in some capacity?"

"Yes, as master of the house."

"You don't mean it?"

"I certainly do. He owns it, and made every cent of the money that paid for it!" said the Major proudly. "That's why I wanted you particularly to note that 'eminent characteristic' I spoke of. Tommy could just as well be sitting, with a fine cigar, on the front piazza in an easy chair, as, with his dhudeen, on the back porch, on an empty box,

where every night you'll find him. It's the unconscious dropping back into the old ways of his father, and his father's father, and his father's father's father. In brief, he sits there the poor lorn symbol of the long oppression of his race."

MRS. MILLER

JOHN B. McKINNEY, Attorney and Counselor at Law, as his sign read, was, for many reasons, a fortunate man. For many other reasons he was not. He was chiefly fortunate in being, as certain opponents often strove witheringly to designate him, "the son of his father," since that sound old gentleman was the wealthiest farmer in that section, with but one son and heir to supplant him, in time, in the rôle of "county god," and haply perpetuate the prouder title of "the biggest taxpayer on the assessment list." And this fact, too, fortunate as it would seem, was doubtless the indirect occasion of a liberal percentage of all John's misfortunes. From his earliest school-days in the little town, up to his tardy graduation from a distant college, the influence of his father's wealth invited his procrastination, humored its results, encouraged the laxity of his ambition, "and even now," as John used, in bitter irony, to put it, "it is aiding and abetting me in the ostensible practise of my chosen profession, a listless, aimless undetermined man of forty, and a confirmed bachelor at that!" At the utterance of his self-depreciating statement, John

generally jerked his legs down from the top of his desk; and rising and kicking his chair back to the wall he would stump around his littered office till the manila carpet steamed with dust. Then he would wildly break away, seeking refuge either in the open street, or in his room at the old-time tavern, The Eagle House, "where," he would say, "I have lodged and boarded, I do solemnly asseverate, for a long, unbroken, middle-aged eternity of ten years, and can yet assert, in the words of the more fortunately-dying Webster, that 'I still live'!"

Extravagantly satirical as he was at times, John had always an indefinable drollery about him that made him agreeable company to his friends, at least; and such an admiring friend he had constantly at hand in the person of Bert Haines. Both were Bohemians in natural tendency, and, though John was far in Bert's advance in point of age, he found the young man "just the kind of a fellow to have around;" while Bert, in turn, held his senior in profound esteem—looked up to him, in fact, and even in his eccentricities strove to pattern himself after him. And so it was, when summer days were dull and tedious, these two could muse and doze the hours away together; and when the nights were long, and dark, and deep, and beautiful, they could drift out in the noonlight of the stars, and with "the soft complaining flute" and "warbling lute," "lay the pipes," as John would say, for their enduring popularity with the girls! And it was immediately subsequent to one of these romantic excursions, when

the belated pair, at two o'clock in the morning, had skulked up a side stairway of the old hotel, and gained John's room, with nothing more serious happening than Bert falling over a trunk and smashing his guitar,—just after such a night of romance and adventure it was that, in the seclusion of John's room, Bert had something of especial import to communicate.

"Mack," he said, as that worthy anathematized a spiteful match, and then sucked his finger.

"Blast the all-fired old torch!" said John, wrestling with the lamp-flue, and turning on a welcome flame at last. "Well, you said 'Mack'! Why don't you go on? And don't bawl at the top of your lungs, either. You've already succeeded in waking every boarder in the house with that guitar, and you want to make amends now by letting them go to sleep again!"

"But my dear fellow," said Bert with forced calmness, "you're the fellow that's making all the noise—and—"

"Why, you howling dervish!" interrupted John, with a feigned air of pleased surprise and admiration. "But let's drop controversy. Throw the fragments of your guitar in the wood-box there, and proceed with the opening proposition."

"What I was going to say was this," said Bert, with a half-desperate enunciation; "I'm getting tired of this way of living—clean, dead-tired, and fagged out, and sick of the whole artificial business!"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed John, with a towering disdain, "you needn't go any further! I know just what malady is throttling you. It's reform—reform! You're going to 'turn over a new leaf,' and all that, and sign the pledge, and quit cigars, and go to work, and pay your debts, and gravitate back into Sunday-school, where you can make love to the preacher's daughter under the guise of religion, and desecrate the sanctity of the innermost pale of the church by confessions at Class of your 'thorough conversion'! Oh, you're going to—"

"No, but I'm going to do nothing of the sort," interrupted Bert resentfully. "What I mean—if you'll let me finish—is, I'm getting too old to be eternally undignifying myself with this 'singing of midnight strains under Bonnybell's window-panes,' and too old to be keeping myself in constant humiliation and expense by the borrowing and stringing up of old guitars, together with the breakage of the same, and the general wear-and-tear on a constitution that is slowly being sapped to its foundations by exposure in the night-air and the dew."

"And while you receive no further compensation in return," said John, "than, perhaps, the coy turning up of a lamp at an upper casement where the jasmine climbs; or an exasperating patter of invisible palms; or a huge dank wedge of fruit-cake shoved at you by the old man, through a crack in the door."

"Yes, and I'm going to have my just reward, is what I mean," said Bert, "and exchange the lover's

life for the benedict's. Going to hunt out a good sensible girl and marry her." And as the young man concluded this desperate avowal he jerked the bow of his cravat into a hard knot, kicked his hat under the bed, and threw himself on the sofa like an old suit.

John stared at him with absolute compassion. "Poor devil," he said half musingly, "I know just how he feels—

> "Ring in the wind his wedding chimes,
> Smile, villagers, at every door;
> Old churchyards stuffed with buried crimes,
> Be clad in sunshine o'er and o'er.—"

"Oh, here!" exclaimed the wretched Bert, jumping to his feet; "let up on that dismal recitative. It would make a dog howl to hear that!"

"Then you 'let up' on that suicidal talk of marrying," replied John, "and all that harangue of incoherency about your growing old. Why, my dear fellow, you're at least a dozen years my junior, and look at me!" and John glanced at himself in the glass with a feeble pride, noting the gray sparseness of his side-hair, and its plaintive dearth on top. "Of course I've got to admit," he continued, "that my hair is gradually evaporating; but for all that, I'm 'still in the ring,' don't you know; as young in society, for the matter of that, as yourself! And this is just the reason why I don't want you to blight every prospect in your life by marrying at your age—especially a woman—I mean the

kind of woman you'd be sure to fancy at your age."

"Didn't I say 'a good sensible girl' was the kind I had selected?" Bert remonstrated.

"Oh!" exclaimed John, "you've selected her, then?—and without one word to me!" he ended, rebukingly.

"Well, hang it all!" said Bert impatiently; "I knew how *you* were, and just how you'd talk me out of it; and I made up my mind that for once, at least, I'd follow the dictations of a heart that—however capricious in youthful frivolities—should beat, in manhood, loyal to itself and loyal to its own affinity."

"Go it! Fire away! Farewell, vain world!" exclaimed the excited John.—"Trade your soul off for a pair of ear-bobs and a button-hook—a hank of jute hair and a box of lily-white! I've buried not less than ten old chums this way, and here's another nominated for the tomb."

"But you've got no *reason* about you," began Bert,—"I want to"—

"And so do *I* 'want to,'" broke in John finally, —"I want to get some sleep.—So 'register' and come to bed.—And lie up on edge, too, when you *do* come—'cause this old catafalque-of-a-bed is just about as narrow as your views of single blessedness! Peace! Not another word! Pile in! Pile in! I'm three-parts sick, anyhow, and I want rest!" And very truly he spoke.

It was a bright morning when the slothful John was aroused by a long vociferous pounding on the

door. He started up in bed to find himself alone—the victim of his wrathful irony having evidently risen and fled away while his pitiless tormentor slept—"Doubtless to accomplish at once that nefarious intent as set forth by his unblushing confession of last night," mused the miserable John. And he ground his fingers in the corners of his swollen eyes, and leered grimly in the glass at the feverish orbs, blood-shot, blurred and aching.

The pounding on the door continued. John looked at his watch; it was only eight o'clock.

"Hi, there!" he called viciously. "What do you mean, anyhow?" he went on, elevating his voice again; "shaking a man out of bed when he's just dropping into his first sleep?"

"I mean that you're going to get up; that's what!" replied a firm female voice. "It's eight o'clock, and I want to put your room in order; and I'm not going to wait all day about it, either! Get up and go down to your breakfast, and let me have the room!" And the clamor at the door was industriously renewed.

"Say!" called John querulously, hurrying on his clothes, "Say, you!"

"There's no 'say' about it!" responded the determined voice: "I've heard about you and your ways around this house, and I'm not going to put up with it! You'll not lie in bed till high noon when I've got to keep your room in proper order!"

"Oh, ho!" bawled John intelligently: "reckon you're the new invasion here? Doubtless you're

that girl that's been hanging up the new window-blinds that won't roll, and disguising the pillows with clean slips, and hennin' round among my books and papers on the table here, and aging me generally till I don't know my own handwriting by the time I find it! Oh, yes, you're going to revolutionize things here; you're going to introduce promptness, and system, and order. See you've even filled the wash-pitcher and tucked two starched towels through the handle. Haven't got any tin towels, have you? I rather like this new soap, too! So solid and durable, you know; warranted not to raise a lather. Might as well wash one's hands with a door-knob!"

And as John's voice grumbled away into the sullen silence again, the determined voice without responded: "Oh, you can growl away to your heart's content, Mr. McKinney, but I want you to understand distinctly that I'm not going to humor you in any of your old bachelor, sluggardly, slovenly ways, and whims and notions. And I want you to understand, too, that I'm not hired help in this house, nor a chambermaid, nor anything of the kind. I'm the landlady here; and I'll give you just ten minutes more to get down to your breakfast, or you'll not get any—that's all!" And as the reversed cuff John was in the act of buttoning slid from his wrist and rolled under the dresser, he heard a stiff rustling of starched muslin flouncing past the door, and the quick italicized patter of determined gaiters down the hall.

"Look here," said John to the bright-faced boy in the hotel office, a half hour later. "It seems the house here's been changing hands again."

"Yes, sir," said the boy, closing the cigar case, and handing him a lighted match. "Well, the new landlord, whoever he is," continued John, patronizingly, "is a good one. Leastwise, he knows what's good to eat, and how to serve it."

The boy laughed timidly,—"It ain't a 'landlord,' though—it's a landlady; it's my mother."

"Ah," said John, dallying with the change the boy had pushed toward him. "Your mother, eh? And where's your father?"

"He's dead," said the boy.

"And what's this for?" abruptly asked John, examining his change.

"That's your change," said the boy: "You got three for a quarter, and gave me a half."

"Well, *you* just keep it," said John, sliding back the change. "It's for good luck, you know, my boy. Same as drinking your long life and prosperity. And, oh yes, by the way, you may tell your mother I'll have a friend to dinner with me to-day."

"Yes, sir, and thank you, sir," said the beaming boy.

"Handsome boy!" mused John, as he walked down street. "Takes that from his father, though, I'll wager my existence!"

Upon his office desk John found a hastily written note. It was addressed in the well-known hand of his old chum. He eyed the missive apprehensively,

and there was a positive pathos in his voice as he said aloud, "It's our divorce. I feel it!" The note, headed, "At the Office, Four in Morning," ran like this:

"Dear Mack—I left you slumbering so soundly that, by noon, when you waken, I hope, in your refreshed state, you will look more tolerantly on my intentions as partially confided to you this night. I will not see you here again to say good-by. I wanted to, but was afraid to 'rouse the sleeping lion.' I will not close my eyes to-night—fact is, I haven't time. Our serenade at Josie's was a prearranged signal by which she is to be ready and at the station for the five morning train. You may remember the lighting of three consecutive matches at her window before the igniting of her lamp. That meant, 'Thrice dearest one, I'll meet thee at the depot at four-thirty sharp.' So, my dear Mack, this is to inform you that, even as you read, Josie and I have eloped. It is all the old man's fault, yet I forgive him. Hope he'll return the favor. Josie predicts he will, inside of a week—or two weeks, anyhow. Good-by, Mack, old boy; and let a fellow down as easy as you can. Affectionately,

"BERT."

"Heavens!" exclaimed John, stifling the note in his hand and stalking tragically around the room. "Can it be possible that I have nursed a frozen viper? An ingrate? A wolf in sheep's clothing? An orang-outang in gent's furnishings?"

"Was you calling me, sir?" asked a voice at the door. It was the janitor.

"No!" thundered John; "Quit my sight! get out of my way! No, no, Thompson, I don't mean that," he called after him. "Here's a half-dollar for you, and I want you to lock up the office, and tell anybody that wants to see me that I've been set upon, and sacked and assassinated in cold blood; and I've fled to my father's in the country, and am lying there in the convulsions of dissolution, babbling of green fields and running brooks, and thirsting for the life of every woman that comes in gunshot!" And then, more like a confirmed invalid than a man in the strength and pride of his prime, he crept down into the street again, and thence back to his hotel.

Dejectedly and painfully climbing to his room, he encountered, on the landing above, a little woman in a jaunty dusting-cap and a trim habit of crisp muslin. He tried to evade her, but in vain. She looked him squarely in the face—occasioning him the dubious impression of either needing shaving very badly, or having egg-stains on his chin.

"You're the gentleman in Number 11, I believe?" Why, Mr. McKinney, are you ill?"

He nodded confusedly.

"Mr. McKinney is your name, I think," she queried, with a pretty elevation of the eyebrows.

"Yes, ma'am," said John rather abjectly. "You see, ma'am—But I beg pardon," he went on stammeringly, and with a very awkward bow—"I beg pardon, but I am addressing—ah—the—ah—the—"

"You are addressing the new landlady," she interpolated pleasantly. "Mrs. Miller is my name. I think we should be friends, Mr. McKinney, since I hear that you are one of the oldest patrons of the house."

"Thank you—thank you!" said John, completely embarrassed. "Yes, indeed!—ha, ha. Oh, yes—yes—really, we must be quite old friends, I assure you, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Mrs. Miller," smilingly prompted the little woman.

"Yes, ah, yes,—Mrs. Miller. Lovely morning, Mrs. Miller," said John, edging past her and backing toward his room.

But as Mrs. Miller was laughing outright, for some mysterious reason, and gave no affirmation in response to his proposition as to the quality of the weather, John, utterly abashed and nonplused, darted into his room and closed the door. "Deucedly extraordinary woman!" he thought; "wonder what's her idea!"

He remained locked in his room till the dinner-hour; and, when he promptly emerged for that occasion, there was a very noticeable improvement in his personal appearance, in point of dress, at least, though there still lingered about his smoothly-shaven features a certain haggard, care-worn, anxious look that would not out.

Next his own at the table he found a chair tilted forward, as though in reservation for some honored guest. What did it mean? Oh, he remembered

now. Told the boy to tell his mother he would have a friend to dine with him. Bert—and, blast the fellow!—was, doubtless, dining then with a far preferable companion—his wife—in a palace-car on the P., C. & St. L., a hundred miles away. The thought was maddening. Of course, now, the landlady would have material for a new assault. And how could he avert it? A despairing film blurred his sight for the moment—then the eyes flashed daringly. "I will meet it like a man!" he said, mentally—"yea, like a State's Attorney,—I will invite it! Let her do her worst!"

He called a servant, giving some message in an undertone.

"Yes, sir," said the agreeable servant, "I'll go right away, sir," and left the room.

Five minutes elapsed, and then a voice at his shoulder startled him:

"Did you send for me, Mr. McKinney? What is it I can do?"

"You are very kind, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Mrs. Miller," said the lady, with a smile that he remembered.

"Now, please spare me even the mildest of rebukes. I deserve your censure, but I can't stand it —I can't positively!" and there was a pleading look in John's lifted eyes that changed the little woman's smile to an expression of real solicitude. "I have sent for you," continued John, "to ask of you three great favors. Please be seated while I enumerate them. First—I want you to forgive and

forget that ill-natured, uncalled-for grumbling of mine this morning when you awakened me."

"Why, certainly," said the landlady, again smiling, though quite seriously.

"I thank you," said John with dignity. "And, second," he continued—"I want your assurance that my extreme confusion and awkwardness on the occasion of our meeting later were rightly interpreted."

"Certainly—certainly," said the landlady with the kindliest sympathy.

"I am grateful—utterly," said John, with newer dignity. "And then," he went on,—"after informing you that it is impossible for the best friend I have in the world to be with me at this hour, as intended, I want you to do me the very great honor of dining with me. Will you?"

"Why, certainly," said the charming little landlady—"and a thousand thanks besides! But tell me something of your friend," she continued, as they were being served. "What is he like—and what is his name—and where is he?"

"Well," said John warily,—"he's like all young fellows of his age. He's quite young, you know—not over thirty, I should say—a mere boy, in fact, but clever—talented—versatile."

"—Unmarried, of course," said the chatty little woman.

"Oh, yes!" said John, in a matter-of-course tone—but he caught himself abruptly—then stared intently at his napkin—glanced evasively at the side-

face of his questioner, and said,—"Oh, yes! Yes, indeed! He's unmarried.—Old bachelor like myself, you know. Ha! Ha!"

"So he's not like the young man here that distinguished himself last night?" said the little woman archly.

The fork in John's hand, half-lifted to his lips, faltered and fell back toward his plate.

"Why, what's that?" said John in a strange voice; "I hadn't heard anything about it—I mean I haven't heard anything about any young man. What was it?"

"Haven't heard anything about the elopement?" exclaimed the little woman in astonishment.—"Why it's been the talk of the town all morning. Elopement in high life—son of a grain-dealer, name of Hines, or Himes, or something, and a preacher's daughter—Josie somebody—didn't catch her last name. Wonder if you don't know the parties—Why, Mr. McKinney, are you ill?"

"Oh, no—not at all!" said John: "Don't mention it. Ha—ha! Just eating too rapidly, that's all. Go on with—you were saying that Bert and Josie had really eloped."

"What 'Bert'?" asked the little woman quickly.

"Why, did I say Bert?" said John, with a guilty look. "I meant Haines, of course, you know—Haines and Josie.—And did they really elope?"

"That's the report," answered the little woman, as though deliberating some important evidence; "and they say, too, that the plot of the runaway

was quite ingenious. It seems the young lovers were assisted in their flight by some old fellow—friend of the young man's—Why, Mr. McKinney, you *are* ill, surely?"

John's face was as ashen.

"No—no!" he gasped painfully: "Go on—go on! Tell me more about the—the—the old fellow—the old reprobate! And is he still at large?"

"Yes," said the little woman, anxiously regarding the strange demeanor of her companion. "They say, though, that the law can do nothing with him, and that this fact only intensifies the agony of the broken-hearted parents—for it seems they have, till now, regarded him both as a gentleman and family friend in whom"—

"I really am ill," moaned John, waveringly rising to his feet; "but I beg you not to be alarmed. Tell your little boy to come to my room, where I will retire at once, if you'll excuse me, and send for my physician. It is simply a nervous attack. I am often troubled so; and only perfect quiet and seclusion restores me. You have done me a great honor, Mrs."—("Mrs. Miller," sighed the sympathetic little woman)—"Mrs. Miller,—and I thank you more than I have words to express." He bowed limply, turned through a side door opening on a stair, and tottered to his room.

During the three weeks' illness through which he passed, John had every attention—much more, indeed, than he had consciousness to appreciate. For

the most part his mind wandered, and he talked of curious things, and laughed hysterically, and serenaded mermaids that dwelt in grassy seas of dew, and were bald-headed like himself. He played upon a fourteen-jointed flute of solid gold, with diamond holes, and keys carved out of thawless ice. His old father came at first to take him home; but he could not be moved, the doctor said.

Two weeks of John's illness had worn away, when a very serious-looking young man, in a traveling duster, and a high hat, came up the stairs to see him. A handsome young lady was clinging to his arm. It was Bert and Josie. She had guessed the very date of their forgiveness. John awoke even clearer in mind than usual that afternoon. He recognized his old chum at a glance, and Josie—now Bert's wife. Yes, he comprehended that. He was holding a hand of each when another figure entered. His thin white fingers loosened their clasp, and he held a hand toward the newcomer. "Here," he said, "is my best friend in the world—Bert, you and Josie will love her, I know; for this is Mrs.—Mrs."—"Mrs. Miller," said the radiant little woman. —"Yes,—Mrs. Miller," said John, very proudly.

AT ZEKESBURY

THE little town, as I recall it, was of just enough dignity and dearth of the same to be an ordinary county seat in Indiana—"The Grand Old Hoosier State," as it was used to being howlingly referred to by the forensic stump orator from the old stand in the court-house yard—a political campaign being the wildest delight that Zekesbury might ever hope to call its own.

Through years the fitful happenings of the town and its vicinity went on the same—the same! Annually about one circus ventured in, and vanished, and was gone, even as a passing trumpet-blast; the usual rainy season swelled the "Crick," the driftage choking at "the covered bridge," and backing water till the old road looked amphibious; and crowds of curious townfolk struggled down to look upon the watery wonder, and lean awestruck above it, and spit in it, and turn mutely home again.

The usual formula of incidents peculiar to an uneventful town and its vicinity: The countryman from "Jessup's Crossing," with the corn-stalk coffin-measure, loped into town, his steaming little gray-and-red-flecked "roadster" gurgitating, as it were,

with that mysterious utterance that ever has commanded and ever must evoke the wonder and bewilderment of every boy; the small-pox rumor became prevalent betimes, and the subtle aroma of the asafetida-bag permeated the graded schools "from turret to foundation-stone"; the still recurring exposé of the poor-house management; the farm-hand, with the scythe across his shoulder, struck dead by lightning; the long-drawn quarrel between the rival editors culminating in one of them assaulting the other with a "sidestick," and the other kicking the one down-stairs and thenceward *ad libitum;* the tramp, suppositiously stealing a ride, found dead on the railroad; the grand jury returning a sensational indictment against a bar-tender *non est;* the Temperance outbreak; the "Revival;" the Church Festival; and the "Free Lectures on Phrenology, and Marvels of Mesmerism," at the town hall. It was during the time of the last-mentioned sensation, and directly through this scientific investigation, that I came upon two of the town's most remarkable characters. And however meager my outline of them may prove, my material for the sketch is most accurate in every detail, and no deviation from the cold facts of the case shall influence any line of my report.

For some years prior to this odd experience I had been connected with a daily paper at the state capital; and latterly a prolonged session of the legislature, where I specially reported, having told threateningly upon my health, I took both the

advantage of a brief vacation, and the invitation of a young bachelor senator, to get out of the city for a while, and bask my respiratory organs in the revivifying rural air of Zekesbury—the home of my new friend.

"It'll pay you to get out here," he said cordially, meeting me at the little station, "and I'm glad you've come, for you'll find no end of odd characters to amuse you." And under the very pleasant sponsorship of my senatorial friend, I was placed at once on genial terms with half the citizens of the little town—from the shirt-sleeved nabob of the county office to the droll wag of the favorite loafing-place—the rules and by-laws of which resort, by the way, being rudely charcoaled on the wall above the cutter's bench, and somewhat artistically culminating in an original dialect legend which ran thus:

> F'r instunce, now, when *some* folks gits
> To relyin' on theyr wits,
> Ten to one they git too smart
> And *spile* it all, right at the start!
> Feller wants to jest go slow
> And do his *thinkin'* first, you know.
> *'F I can't think up somepin' good,*
> *I set still and chaw my cood!*

And it was at this inviting rendezvous, two or three evenings following my arrival, that the general crowd, acting upon the random proposition of one of the boys, rose as a man and wended its hilarious way to the town hall.

"Phrenology," said the little, old, bald-headed lecturer and mesmerist, thumbing the egg-shaped head of a young man I remembered to have met that afternoon in some law office; "phrenology," repeated the Professor—"or rather the *term* phrenology—is derived from two Greek words signifying *mind* and *discourse;* hence we find embodied in phrenology-proper, the science of intellectual measurement, together with the capacity of intelligent communication of the varying mental forces and their flexibilities, etc., etc. The study, then, of phrenology is, to simplify it wholly—is, I say, the general contemplation of the workings of the mind as made manifest through the certain corresponding depressions and protuberances of the human skull when, of course, in a healthy state of action and development, as we find the conditions exemplified in the subject before us."

Here the "subject" vaguely smiled.

"You recognize that mug, don't you?" whispered my friend. "It's that coruscating young ass, you know, Hedrick—in Cummings' office—trying to study law and literature at the same time, and tampering with 'The Monster that Annually,' don't you know?—where we found the two young students scuffling round the office, and smelling of peppermint?—Hedrick, you know, and Sweeney. Sweeney, the slim chap, with the pallid face, and frog-eyes, and clammy hands! You remember I told you 'there was a pair of 'em'? Well, they're up to something here to-night. Hedrick, there on

the stage in front; and Sweeney—don't you see?—with the gang on the rear seats."

"Phrenology—again," continued the lecturer, "is, we may say, a species of mental geography, as it were; which—by a study of the skull—leads also to a study of the brain within, even as geology naturally follows the initial contemplation of the earth's surface. The brain, thurfur, or intellectual retort, as we may say, natively exerts a molding influence on the skull contour; thurfur is the expert in phrenology most readily enabled to accurately locate the multitudinous intellectual forces, and most exactingly estimate, as well, the sequent character of each subject submitted to his scrutiny. As, in the example before us—a young man, doubtless well known in your midst, though, I may say, an entire stranger to myself—I venture to disclose some characteristic trends and tendencies, as indicated by this phrenological depression and development of the skull proper, as later we will show, through the mesmeric condition, the accuracy of our mental diagnosis."

Throughout the latter part of this speech my friend nudged me spasmodically, whispering something which was jostled out of intelligent utterance by some inward spasm of laughter.

"In this head," said the Professor, straddling his malleable fingers across the young man's bumpy brow—"In this head we find Ideality large—abnormally large, in fact; thurby indicating—taken in conjunction with a like development of the per-

ceptive qualities—language following, as well, in the prominent eye—thurby indicating, I say, our subject as especially endowed with a love for the beautiful—the sublime—the elevating—the refined and delicate—the lofty and superb—in nature, and in all the sublimated attributes of the human heart and beatific soul. In fact, we find this young man possessed of such natural gifts as would befit him for the exalted career of the sculptor, the actor, the artist, or the poet—any ideal calling; in fact, any calling but a practical, matter-of-fact vocation; though in poetry he would seem to best succeed."

"Well," said my friend seriously, "he's *feeling* for the boy!" Then laughingly: "Hedrick *has* written some rhymes for the county papers, and Sweeney once introduced him, at an Old Settlers' Meeting, as 'The Best Poet in Center Township,' and never cracked a smile! Always after each other that way, but the best friends in the world. *Sweeney's* strong suit is elocution. He has a native ability that way by no means ordinary, but even that gift he abuses and distorts simply to produce grotesque, and oftentimes, ridiculous effects. For instance, nothing more delights him than to 'loathfully' consent to answer a request, at The Mite Society, some evening, for 'an appropriate selection,' and then, with an elaborate introduction of the same, and an exalted tribute to the refined genius of the author, proceed with a most gruesome rendition of 'Alonzo The Brave and The Fair Imogene,' in a way to coagulate the blood and curl the hair of his fair

listeners with abject terror. Pale as a corpse, you know, and with that cadaverous face, lit with those malignant-looking eyes, his slender figure, and his long thin legs and arms and hands, and his whole diabolical talent and adroitness brought into play—why, I want to say to you, it's enough to scare 'em to death! Never a smile from him, though, till he and Hedrick are safe out into the night again—then, of course, they hug each other and howl over it like Modocs! But pardon; I'm interrupting the lecture. Listen."

"A lack of continuity, however," continued the Professor, "and an undue love of approbation, would, measurably, at least, tend to retard the young man's progress toward the consummation of any loftier ambition, I fear; yet as we have intimated, if the subject were appropriately educated to the need's demand, he could doubtless produce a high order of both prose and poetry—especially the latter—though he could very illy bear being laughed at for his pains."

"He's dead wrong there," said my friend; "Hedrick enjoys being laughed at; he's used to it—gets fat on it!"

"Is fond of his friends," continued the Professor, "and the heartier they are the better; might even be convivially inclined—if so tempted—but prudent—in a degree," loiteringly concluded the speaker, as though unable to find the exact bump with which to bolster up the last named attribute.

The subject blushed vividly—my friend's right

eyelid dropped, and there was a noticeable, though elusive sensation throughout the audience.

"But!" said the Professor explosively, "selecting a directly opposite subject, in conjunction with the study of the one before us [turning to the group at the rear of the stage and beckoning], we may find a newer interest in the practical comparison of these subjects side by side." And the Professor pushed a very pale young man into position.

"Sweeney!" whispered my friend delightedly; "now look out!"

"In *this* subject," said the Professor, "we find the practical business head. Square—though small—a trifle light at the base, in fact; but well balanced at the important points at least; thoughtful eye—wide-awake — crafty—quick—restless—a policy eye, though not denoting language—unless, perhaps, mere business forms and direct statements."

"Fooled again!" whispered my friend; "and I'm afraid the old man will fail to nest out the fact also that Sweeney is the cold-bloodedest guyer on the face of the earth, and with more diabolical resources than a prosecuting attorney; the Professor ought to know this, too, by this time—for these same two chaps have been visiting the old man in his room at the hotel;—that's what I was trying to tell you a while ago. The old chap thinks he's 'playing' the boys, is my idea; but it's the other way, or I lose my guess."

"Now, under the mesmeric influence—if the two subjects will consent to its administration," said

the Professor, after some further tedious preamble, "we may at once determine the fact of my assertions, as will be proved by their action while in this peculiar state." Here some apparent remonstrance was met with from both subjects, though amicably overcome by the Professor first manipulating the stolid brow and pallid front of the imperturbable Sweeney—after which the same mysterious ordeal was loathfully submitted to by Hedrick—though a noticeably longer time was consumed in securing his final loss of self-control. At last, however, this curious phenomenon was presented, and there before us stood the two swaying figures, the heads dropped back, the lifted hands, with thumb and finger-tips pressed lightly together, the eyelids languid and half closed, and the features, in appearance, wan and humid.

"Now, sir!" said the Professor, leading the limp Sweeney forward, and addressing him in a quick sharp tone of voice.—"Now, sir, you are a great contractor—own large factories, and with untold business interests. Just look out there! [pointing out across the expectant audience] look there, and see the countless minions toiling servilely at your dread mandates. And yet—ha! ha! See! see!—They recognize the avaricious greed that would thus grind them in the very dust; they see, alas! they see themselves, half-clothed—half-fed, that you may glut your coffers. Half-starved, they listen to the wail of wife and babe, and with eyes upraised in prayer, they see *you* rolling by in gilded coach, and

swathed in silk attire. But—ha! again! Look—look! they are rising in revolt against you! Speak to them before too late! Appeal to them—quell them with the promise of the just advance of wages they demand!"

The limp figure of Sweeney took on something of a stately and majestic air. With a graceful and commanding gesture of the hand, he advanced a step or two; then, after a pause of some seconds duration, in which the lifted face grew pale, as it seemed, and the eyes a denser black, he said:

> "But yesterday
> I looked away
> O'er happy lands, where sunshine lay
> In golden blots,
> Inlaid with spots
> Of shade and wild forget-me-nots."

The voice was low, but clear, and even musical. The Professor started at the strange utterance, looked extremely confused, and, as the boisterous crowd cried "Hear, hear!" he motioned the subject to continue, with some gasping comment interjected, which, if audible, would have run thus: "My God! It's an inspirational poem!"

> "My head was fair
> With flaxen hair—"

resumed the subject.

"Yoop-ee!" yelled an irreverent auditor.

"Silence! silence!" commanded the excited Pro-

fessor in a hoarse whisper; then, turning enthusiastically to the subject—"Go on, young man! Go on!—*'Thy head was fair with flaxen hair——'*"

> "My head was fair
> With flaxen hair,
> And fragrant breezes, faint and rare,
> And, warm with drouth
> From out the south,
> Blew all my curls across my mouth."

The speaker's voice, exquisitely modulated, yet resonant as the twang of a harp, now seemed of itself to draw and hold each listener; while a certain extravagance of gesticulation—a fantastic movement of both form and feature—seemed very near akin to fascination. And so flowed on the curious utterance:—

> "And, cool and sweet,
> My naked feet
> Found dewy pathways through the wheat;
> And out again
> Where, down the lane,
> The dust was dimpled with the rain."

In the pause following there was a breathlessness almost painful. The poem went on:

> "But yesterday
> I heard the lay
> Of summer birds, when I, as they
> With breast and wing,
> All quivering
> With life and love, could only sing.

"My head was leant
Where, with it, blent
A maiden's, o'er her instrument;
While all the night,
From vale to height,
Was filled with echoes of delight.

"And all our dreams
Were lit with gleams
Of that lost land of reedy streams,
Along whose brim
Forever swim
Pan's lilies, laughing up at him."

And still the inspired singer held rapt sway.

"It is wonderful!" I whispered, under breath.

"Of course it is!" answered my friend. "But listen; there is more:"

"But yesterday! . . . .
O blooms of May,
And summer roses—where away?
O stars above;
And lips of love,
And all the honeyed sweets thereof!—

"O lad and lass,
And orchard pass,
And briered lane, and daisied grass!
O gleam and gloom,
And woodland bloom,
And breezy breaths of all perfume!—

"No more for me
Or mine shall be
Thy raptures—save in memory,—
No more—no more—
Till through the Door
Of Glory gleam the days of yore."

This was the evident conclusion of the remarkable utterance, and the Professor was impetuously fluttering his hands about the subject's upward-staring eyes, stroking his temples, and snapping his fingers in his face.

"Well," said Sweeney, as he stood suddenly awakened, and grinning in an idiotic way, "how did the old thing work?" And it was in the consequent hilarity and loud and long applause, perhaps, that the Professor was relieved from the explanation of this rather astounding phenomenon of the idealistic workings of a purely practical brain—or, as my impious friend scoffed the incongruity later, in a particularly withering allusion, as the "blank-blanked fallacy, don't you know, of staying the hunger of a howling mob by feeding 'em on spring poetry!"

The tumult of the audience did not cease even with the retirement of Sweeney, and cries of "Hedrick! Hedrick!" only subsided with the Professor's high-keyed announcement that the subject was even then endeavoring to make himself heard, but could not until utter quiet was restored, adding the further appeal that the young man had already been a long time under the mesmeric spell, and ought not be so detained for an unnecessary period. "See," he concluded, with an assuring wave of the hand toward the subject, "see; he is about to address you. Now, quiet!—utter quiet, if you please!"

"Great heavens!" exclaimed my friend stiflingly; "just look at the boy! Get on to that position for a

poet! Even Sweeney has fled from the sight of him!"

And truly, too, it was a grotesque pose the young man had assumed; not wholly ridiculous either, since the dwarfed position he had settled into seemed more a genuine physical condition than an affected one. The head, back-tilted, and sunk between the shoulders, looked abnormally large, while the features of the face appeared peculiarly child-like—especially the eyes—wakeful and wide apart, and very bright, yet very mild and very artless; and the drawn and cramped outline of the legs and feet, and of the arms and hands, even to the shrunken, slender-looking fingers, all combined to convey most strikingly to the pained senses the fragile frame and pixy figure of some pitiably afflicted child, unconscious altogether of the pathos of its own deformity.

"Now, mark the cuss, Horatio!" gasped my friend.

At first the speaker's voice came very low, and somewhat piping, too, and broken—an eery sort of voice it was, of brittle and erratic *timbre* and undulant inflection. Yet it was beautiful. It had the ring of childhood in it, though the ring was not pure golden, and at times fell echoless. The *spirit* of its utterance was always clear and pure and crisp and cheery as the twitter of a bird, and yet forever ran an undercadence through it like a low-pleading prayer. Half garrulously, and like a shallow brook

might brawl across a shelvy bottom, the rhythmic little changeling thus began:—

"I'm thist a little crippled boy, an' never goin' to grow
An' git a great big man at all!—'cause Aunty told me so.
When I was thist a baby onc't I falled out of the bed
An' got 'The Curv'ture of the Spine'—'at's what the Doctor said.
I never had no Mother nen—fer my Pa runned away
An' dassn't come back here no more—'cause he was drunk one day
An' stobbed a man in thish-ere town, an' couldn't pay his fine!
An' nen my Ma she died—an' I got 'Curv'ture of the Spine'!"

A few titterings from the younger people in the audience marked the opening stanza, while a certain restlessness, and a changing to more attentive positions seemed the general tendency. The old Professor, in the meantime, had sunk into one of the empty chairs. The speaker went on with more gaiety:—

"I'm nine years old! An' you can't guess how much I weigh, I bet!—
Last birthday I weighed thirty-three!—An' I weigh thirty yet!
I'm awful little fer my size—I'm purt' nigh littler 'an
Some babies is!—an' neighbers all calls me 'The Little Man'!
An' Doc one time he laughed an' said: 'I 'spect, first think you know,
You'll have a little spike-tail coat an' travel with a show!'
An' nen I laughed—till I looked round an' Aunty was a-cryin'—
Sometimes she acts like that, 'cause I got 'Curv'ture of the Spine'!"

Just in front of me a great broad-shouldered countryman, with a rainy smell in his cumbrous overcoat, cleared his throat vehemently, looked startled at the sound, and again settled forward, his weedy chin resting on the knuckles of his hands as they tightly clutched the seat before him. And it was like being taken into a childish confidence as the quaint speech continued:—

"I set—while Aunty's washin'—on my little long-leg stool,
An' watch the little boys an' girls a-skippin' by to school;
An' I peck on the winder, an' holler out an' say:
'Who wants to fight The Little Man at dares you all to-day?'
An' nen the boys climbs on the fence, an' little girls peeks through,
An' they all says: 'Cause you're so big, you think we're 'feard o' you!'
An' nen they yell, an' shake their fist at me, like I shake mine—
They're thist in fun, you know, 'cause I got 'Curv'ture of the Spine'!"

"Well," whispered my friend, with rather odd irrelevance, I thought, "of course you see through the scheme of the fellows by this time, don't you?"

"I see nothing," said I, most earnestly, "but a poor little wisp of a child that makes me love him so I dare not think of his dying soon, as he surely must! There; listen!" And the plaintive gaiety of the homely poem ran on:—

"At evening, when the ironin' 's done, an' Aunty's fixed the fire,
An' filled an' lit the lamp, an' trimmed the wick an' turned it higher,
An' fetched the wood all in fer night, an' locked the kitchen door,
An' stuffed the ole crack where the wind blows in up through the floor—
She sets the kittle on the coals, an' biles an' makes the tea,
An' fries the liver an' the mush, an' cooks a egg fer me;
An' sometimes—when I cough so hard—her elderberry wine
Don't go so bad fer little boys with 'Curv'ture of the Spine'!"

"Look!" whispered my friend, touching me with his elbow. "Look at the Professor!"

"Look at everybody!" said I. And the artless little voice went on again half quaveringly:—

"But Aunty's all so childish-like on my account, you see,
I'm 'most afeard she'll be took down—an' 'at's what bothers *me!*—
'Cause ef my good ole Aunty ever would git sick an' die,
I don't know what she'd do in Heaven—till *I* come, by an' by:—
Fer she's so ust to all my ways, an' ever'thing, you know,
An' no one there like me, to nurse an' worry over so!—
'Cause all the little childerns there's so straight an' strong an' fine,
They's nary angel 'bout the place with 'Curv'ture of the Spine'!"

The old Professor's face was in his handkerchief; so was my friend's in his; and so was mine in mine,

as even now my pen drops and I reach for it again.

I half regret joining the mad party that had gathered an hour later in the old law office where these two graceless characters held almost nightly revel, the instigators and conniving hosts of a reputed banquet whose *menu's* range confined itself to herrings, or "blind robins," dried beef, and cheese, with crackers, gingerbread, and sometimes pie; the whole washed down with anything but

> "——Wines that heaven knows when
> Had sucked the fire of some forgotten sun,
> And kept it through a hundred years of gloom
> Still glowing in a heart of ruby."

But the affair was memorable. The old Professor was himself lured into it and loudest in his praise of Hedrick's realistic art; and I yet recall him at the orgie's height, excitedly repulsing the continued slurs and insinuations of the clammy-handed Sweeney, who, still contending against the old man's fulsome praise of his more fortunate rival, at last openly declared that Hedrick was *not* a poet, *not* a genius, and in no way worthy to be classed in the same breath with *himself*—"the gifted but unfortunate *Sweeney,* sir—the unacknowledged author, sir 'y gad, sir!—of the two poems that held you spellbound to-night!"

A CALLER FROM BOONE

BENJ. F. JOHNSON VISITS THE EDITOR

IT was a dim and chill and loveless afternoon in the late fall of eighty-three when I first saw the genial subject of this hasty sketch. From time to time the daily paper on which I worked had been receiving, among the general literary driftage of amateur essayists, poets and sketch-writers, some conceits in verse that struck the editorial head as decidedly novel; and, as they were evidently the production of an unlettered man, and an *old* man, and a farmer at that, they were usually spared the waste-basket, and preserved—not for publication, but to pass from hand to hand among the members of the staff as simply quaint and mirth-provoking specimens of the verdancy of both the venerable author and the Muse inspiring him. Letters as quaint as were the poems invariably accompanied them, and the oddity of these, in fact, had first called attention to the verses. I well remember the general merriment of the office when the first of the old man's letters was read aloud, and I recall, too, some of his comments on his own verse, verbatim. In one place he said: "I make no doubt you will find

some purty *sad* spots in my poetry, considerin'; but I hope you will bear in mind that I am a great sufferer with rheumatizum, and have been, off and on, sence the cold New Years. In the main, however," he continued, "I allus aim to write in a cheerful, comfortin' sperit, so's ef the stuff hangs fire, and don't do no good, it hain't a-goin' to do no harm,—and them's my honest views on poetry."

In another letter, evidently suspecting his poem had not appeared in print because of its dejected tone, he said: "The poetry I herewith send was wrote off on the finest Autumn day I ever laid eyes on! I never felt better in my life. The morning air was as invigoratin' as bitters with tanzy in it, and the folks at breakfast said they never saw such a' appetite on mortal man before. Then I lit out for the barn, and after feedin', I come back and tuck my pen and ink out on the porch, and jest cut loose. I writ and writ till my fingers was that cramped I couldn't hardly let go of the penholder. And the poem I send you is the upshot of it all. Ef you don't find it cheerful enough fer your columns, I'll have to knock under, that's all!" And that poem, as I recall it, certainly was cheerful enough for publication, only the "copy" was almost undecipherable, and the ink, too, so pale and vague, it was thought best to reserve the verses, for the time, at least, and later on revise, copy, punctuate, and then print it sometime, as much for the joke of it as anything. But it was still delayed, neglected, and in a week's time almost entirely forgotten. And so it was upon this

chill and somber afternoon I speak of that an event occurred which most pleasantly reminded me of both the poem with the "sad spots" in it, and the "cheerful" one, "writ out on the porch" that glorious autumn day, that poured its glory through the old man's letter to us.

Outside and in the sanctum the gloom was too oppressive to permit an elevated tendency of either thought or spirit. I could do nothing but sit listless and inert. Paper and pencil were before me, but I could not write—I could not even think coherently, and was on the point of rising and rushing out into the streets for a wild walk, when there came a hesitating knock at the door.

"Come in!" I snarled, grabbing up my pencil and assuming a frightfully industrious air: "Come in!" I almost savagely repeated, "Come in! And shut the door behind you!" and I dropped my lids, bent my gaze fixedly upon the blank pages before me and began scrawling some disconnected nothings with no head or tail or anything.

"Sir; howdy," said a low and pleasant voice. And at once, in spite of my perverse resolve, I looked up. I someway felt rebuked.

The speaker was very slowly, noiselessly closing the door. I could hardly face him when he turned around. An old man, of sixty-five, at least, but with a face and an eye of the most cheery and wholesome expression I had ever seen in either youth or age. Over his broad bronzed forehead and white hair he wore a low-crowned, wide-brimmed black felt

hat, somewhat rusted now, and with the band grease-crusted, and the binding frayed at intervals, and sagging from the threads that held it on. An old-styled frock coat of black, dull brown in streaks, and quite shiny about the collar and lapels. A waistcoat of no describable material or pattern, and a clean white shirt and collar of one piece, with a black string-tie and double bow, which would have been entirely concealed beneath the long white beard but for its having worked around to one side of the neck. The front outline of the face was cleanly shaven, and the beard, growing simply from the under chin and throat, lent the old pioneer the rather singular appearance of having hair all over him with this luxurious growth pulled out above his collar for mere sample.

I arose and asked the old man to sit down, handing him a chair decorously.

"No—no," he said—"I'm much obleeged. I hain't come in to bother you no more'n I can he'p. All I wanted was to know ef you got my poetry all right. You know I take yer paper," he went on, in an explanatory way, "and seein' you printed poetry in it once-in-a-while, I sent you some of mine—neighbors kindo' advised me to," he added apologetically, "and so I sent you some—two or three times I sent you some, but I hain't never seed hide-ner-hair of it in your paper, and as I wus in town to-day, anyhow, I jest thought I'd kindo' drap in and git it back, ef you ain't goin' to print it—'cause I allus save up most the things I write, aimin' sometime to git 'em

all struck off in pamphlet-form, to kindo' distribit round 'mongst the neighbors, don't you know."

Already I had begun to suspect my visitor's identity, and was mechanically opening the drawer of our poetical department.

"How was your poetry signed?" I asked.

"Signed by my own name," he answered proudly, —"signed by my own name,—Johnson—Benjamin F. Johnson, of Boone County—this state."

"And is this one of them, Mr. Johnson?" I asked, unfolding a clumsily-folded manuscript, and closely scrutinizing the verse.

"How does she read?" said the old man eagerly, and searching in the meantime for his spectacles. "How does she read?—Then I can tell you!"

"It reads," said I, studiously conning the old man's bold but bad chirography, and tilting my chair back indolently,—"it reads like this—the first verse does,"—and I very gravely read:—

"Oh! the old swimmin'-hole!"—

"Stop! Stop!" said the old man excitedly—"Stop right there! That's my poetry, but that's not the way to read it by a long shot! Give it to me!" and he almost snatched it from my hand. "Poetry like this ain't no poetry at all, 'less you read it *natchurl* and *in jest the same sperit 'at it's writ in,* don't you understand. It's a' old man a-talkin', rickollect, and a-feelin' kindo' sad, and yit kindo' sorto' good, too, and I opine he wouldn't got that off with a face on him like a' undertaker, and a voice as solemn as a

cow-bell after dark! He'd say it more like this."—
And the old man adjusted his spectacles and read:—

"THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE"

"Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! whare the crick so still and
deep
Looked like a baby-river that was laying half asleep,
And the gurgle of the worter round the drift jest below
Sounded like the laugh of something we onc't ust to know
Before we could remember anything but the eyes
Of the angels lookin' out as we left Paradise;
But the merry days of youth is beyond our controle,
And it's hard to part ferever with the old swimmin'-hole."

I clapped my hands in genuine applause. "Read on!" I said,—"Read on! Read all of it!"

The old man's face was radiant as he continued:—

"Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the happy days of yore,
When I ust to lean above it on the old sickamore,
Oh! it showed me a face in its warm sunny tide
That gazed back at me so gay and glorified,
It made me love myself, as I leaped to caress
My shadder smilin' up at me with sich tenderness.
But them days is past and gone, and old Time's tuck his
toll
From the old man come back to the old swimmin'-hole.

"Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the long, lazy days
When the humdrum of school made so many "run-a-ways,"
How pleasant was the jurney down the old dusty lane,
Whare the tracks of our bare feet was all printed so plane
You could tell by the dent of the heel and the sole
They was lots o' fun on hands at the old swimmin'-hole.
But the lost joys is past! Let your tears in sorrow roll
Like the rain that ust to dapple up the old swimmin'-hole.

"Thare the bullrushes growed, and the cattails so tall,
And the sunshine and shadder fell over it all;
And it mottled the worter with amber and gold
Till the glad lilies rocked in the ripples that rolled;
And the snake-feeder's four gauzy wings fluttered by
Like the ghost of a daisy dropped out of the sky,
Or a wownded apple-blossom in the breeze's controle
As it cut acrost some orchurd to'rds the old swimmin'-hole

"Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! When I last saw the place,
The scenes was all changed, like the change in my face;
The bridge of the railroad now crosses the spot
Whare the old divin'-log lays sunk and fergot.
And I stray down the banks whare the trees ust to be—
But never again will theyr shade shelter me!
And I wish in my sorrow I could strip to the soul,
And dive off in my grave like the old swimmin'-hole."

My applause was long and loud. The old man's interpretation of the poem was a positive revelation, though I was glad enough to conceal from him my moistened eyes by looking through the scraps for other specimens of his verse.

"Here," said I enthusiastically, "is another one, signed 'Benj. F. Johnson,' read me this," and I handed him the poem.

The old man smiled and took the manuscript. "This-here one's on *'The Hoss,'*" he said, simply clearing his throat. "They ain't so much fancy-work about this as the other'n, but they's jest as much *fact,* you can bet—'cause, they're no animal a-livin' 'at I love better 'an

"The Hoss"

"THE HOSS"

"The hoss he is a splendud beast;
  He is man's friend, as heaven desined,
And, search the world from west to east,
  No honester you'll ever find!

"Some calls the hoss 'a pore dumb brute,'
  And yit, like Him who died fer you,
I say, as I theyr charge refute,
  'Fergive; they know not what they do!'

"No wiser animal makes tracks
  Upon these earthly shores, and hence
Arose the axium, true as facts,
  Extoled by all, as 'Good hoss-sense!'

"The hoss is strong, and knows his stren'th,—
  You hitch him up a time er two
And lash him, and he'll go his len'th
  And kick the dashboard out fer you!

"But, treat him allus good and kind,
  And never strike him with a stick,
Ner aggervate him, and you'll find
  He'll never do a hostile trick.

"A hoss whose master tends him right
  And worters him with daily care,
Will do your biddin' with delight,
  And act as docile as *you* air.

"He'll paw and prance to hear your praise,
  Because he's learnt to love you well;
And, though you can't tell what he says,
  He'll nicker all he wants to tell.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST COLLEGE
WALNUT RIDGE, ARK.

"He knows you when you slam the gate
  At early dawn, upon your way
Unto the barn, and snorts elate,
  To git his corn, er oats, er hay.

"He knows you, as the orphant knows
  The folks that loves her like theyr own,
And raises her and "finds" her clothes,
  And "schools" her tel a womern-grown!

"I claim no hoss will harm a man,
  Ner kick, ner run away, cavort,
Stump-suck, er balk, er 'catamaran,'
  Ef you'll jest treat him as you ort.

"But when I see the beast abused,
  And clubbed around as I've saw some,
I want to see his owner noosed,
  And jest yanked up like Absolum!

"Of course they's differunce in stock,—
  A hoss that has a little yeer,
And slender build, and shaller hock,
  Can beat his shadder, mighty near!

"Whilse one that's thick in neck and chist
  And big in leg and full in flank,
That tries to race, I still insist
  He'll have to take the second rank.

"And I have jest laid back and laughed,
  And rolled and wallered in the grass
At fairs, to see some heavy-draft
  Lead out at *first*, yit come in *last!*

"Each hoss has his appinted place,—
  The heavy hoss should plow the soil;—
The blooded racer, he must race,
  And win big wages fer his toil.

"I never bet—ner never wrought
Upon my feller man to bet—
And yit, at times, I've often thought
Of my convictions with regret.

"I bless the hoss from hoof to head—
From head to hoof, and tale to mane!—
I bless the hoss, as I have said,
From head to hoof, and back again!

"I love my God the first of all,
Then Him that perished on the cross,
And next, my wife,—and then I fall
Down on my knees and love the hoss."

Again I applauded, handing the old man still another of his poems, and the last received. "Ah!" said he, as his gentle eyes bent on the title; "this-here's the cheerfullest one of 'em all. This is the one writ, as I wrote you about—on that glorious October morning two weeks ago—I thought your paper would print this-un, shore!"

"Oh, it *will* print it," I said eagerly; "and it will print the other two as well! It will print *anything* that you may do us the honor to offer, and we'll reward you beside just as you may see fit to designate.—But go on—go on! Read me the poem."

The old man's eyes were glistening as he responded with the poem entitled

"WHEN THE FROST IS ON THE PUNKIN"

"When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock,
And you hear the kyouck and gobble of the struttin' turkey-cock,

And the clackin' of the guineys, and the cluckin' of the hens,
And the rooster's hallylooyer as he tiptoes on the fence;
O, it's then's the times a feller is a-feelin' at his best,
With the risin' sun to greet him from a night of peaceful rest,
As he leaves the house, bareheaded, and goes out to feed the stock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.

"They's something kindo' harty-like about the atmusfere
When the heat of summer's over and the coolin' fall is here—
Of course we miss the flowers, and the blossums on the trees,
And the mumble of the hummin'-birds and buzzin' of the bees;
But the air's so appetizin'; and the landscape through the haze
Of a crisp and sunny morning of the airly autumn days
Is a pictur' that no painter has the colorin' to mock—
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.

"The husky, rusty russel of the tossels of the corn,
And the raspin' of the tangled leaves, as golden as the morn;
The stubble in the furries—kindo' lonesome-like, but still
A-preachin' sermuns to us of the barns they growed to fill;
The strawstack in the medder, and the reaper in the shed;
The hosses in theyr stalls below—the clover overhead!—
O, it sets my hart a-clickin' like the tickin' of a clock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock!

Then your apples all is getherd, and the ones a feller keeps
Is poured around the celler-floor in red and yeller heaps;
And your cider-makin' 's over, and your wimmern-folks is through
With theyr mince and apple-butter, and theyr souse and saussage, too! . . .
I don't know how to tell it—but ef sich a thing could be
As the Angels wantin' boardin', and they'd call around on *me*—
I'd want to 'commodate 'em—all the whole-indurin' flock—
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock!"

That was enough! "Surely," thought I, "here is a diamond in the rough, and a 'gem,' too, 'of purest ray serene'!" I caught the old man's hand and wrung it with positive rapture; and it is needless to go further in explanation of how the readers of our daily came to an acquaintance through its columns with the crude, unpolished, yet most gentle genius of Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone.

THE OLD SOLDIER'S STORY

AS TOLD BEFORE THE NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY IN NEW YORK CITY

SINCE we have had no stories to-night I will venture, Mr. President, to tell a story that I have heretofore heard at nearly all the banquets I have ever attended. It is a story simply, and you must bear with it kindly. It is a story as told by a friend of us all, who is found in all parts of all countries, who is immoderately fond of a funny story, and who, unfortunately, attempts to tell a funny story himself—one that he has been particularly delighted with. Well, he is not a story-teller, and especially he is not a funny story-teller. His funny stories, indeed, are oftentimes touchingly pathetic. But to such a story as he tells, being a good-natured man and kindly disposed, we have to listen, because we do not want to wound his feelings by telling him that we have heard that story a great number of times, and that we have heard it ably told by a great number of people from the time we were children. But, as I say, we can not hurt his feelings. We can not stop him. We can not kill him; and so the story generally proceeds. He selects a

very old story always, and generally tells it in about this fashion:—

I heerd an awful funny thing the other day—ha! ha! I don't know whether I kin git it off er not, but, anyhow, I'll tell it to you. Well!—le's see now how the fool-thing goes. Oh, yes!—W'y, there was a feller one time—it was during the army and this feller that I started in to tell you about was in the war and—ha! ha!—there was a big fight a-goin' on, and this feller was in the fight, and it was a big battle and bullets a-flyin' ever' which way, and bomb-shells a-bu'stin', and cannon-balls a-flyin' 'round promiskus; and this feller right in the midst of it, you know, and all excited and het up, and chargin' away; and the fust thing you know along come a cannon-ball and shot his head off—ha! ha! ha! Hold on here a minute!—no, sir; I'm a-gittin' ahead of my story; no, no; it didn't shoot his *head* off—I'm gittin' the cart before the horse there—shot his *leg* off; that was the way; shot his leg off; and down the poor feller drapped, and, of course, in that condition was perfectly he'pless, you know, but yit with presence o' mind enough to know that he was in a dangerous condition ef somepin' wasn't done fer him right away. So he seen a comrade a-chargin' by that he knowed, and he hollers to him and called him by name—I disremember now what the feller's name was. . . .

Well, that's got nothin' to do with the story, anyway; he hollers to him, he did, and says, "Hello, there," he says to him; "here, I want you to come

here and give me a lift; I got my leg shot off, and I want you to pack me back to the rear of the battle" —where the doctors always is, you know, during a fight—and he says, "I want you to pack me back there where I can get med-dy-cinal attention er I'm a dead man, fer I got my leg shot off," he says, "and I want you to pack me back there so's the surgeons kin take keer of me." Well—the feller, as luck would have it, ricko'nized him and run to him and throwed down his own musket, so's he could pick him up; and he stooped down and picked him up and kindo' half-way shouldered him and half-way helt him betwixt his arms like, and then he turned and started back with him—ha! ha! ha! Now, mind, the fight was still a-goin' on—and right at the hot of the fight, and the feller, all excited, you know, like he was, and the soldier that had his leg shot off gittin' kindo' fainty like, and his head kindo' stuck back over the feller's shoulder that was carryin' him. And he hadn't got more'n a couple o' rods with him when another cannon-ball come along and tuk his head off, shore enough!—and the curioust thing about it was—ha! ha!—that the feller was a-packin' him didn't know that he had been hit ag'in at all, and back he went—still carryin' the deceased back—ha! ha! ha!—to where the doctors could take keer of him—as he thought. Well, his cap'n happened to see him, and he thought it was a ruther cur'ous p'ceedin's—a soldier carryin' a dead body out o' the fight—don't you see? And so he hollers at him, and he says to the soldier, the

cap'n did, he says, "Hullo, there; where you goin' with that thing?" the cap'n said to the soldier who was a-carryin' away the feller that had his leg shot off. Well, his head, too, by that time. So he says, "Where you going with that thing?" the cap'n said to the soldier who was a-carryin' away the feller that had his leg shot off. Well, the soldier he stopped—kinder halted, you know, like a private soldier will when his presidin' officer speaks to him—and he says to him, "W'y," he says, "Cap, it's a comrade o' mine and the pore feller has got his leg shot off, and I'm a-packin' him back to where the doctors is; and there was nobody to he'p him, and the feller would 'a' died in his tracks—er track ruther—if it hadn't a-been fer me, and I'm a-packin' him back where the surgeons can take keer of him; where he can get medical attendance—er his wife's a widder!" he says, "'cause he's got his leg shot off!" Then *Cap'n* says, "You blame fool you, he's got his *head* shot off." So then the feller slacked his grip on the body and let it slide down to the ground, and looked at it a minute, all puzzled, you know, and says, "W'y, he told me it was his leg!" Ha! ha! ha!

DIALECT IN LITERATURE

And the common people heard him gladly

OF what shall be said herein of dialect, let it be understood the term dialect referred to is of that general breadth of meaning given it to-day, namely, any speech or vernacular outside of the prescribed form of good English in its present state. The present state of the English is, of course, not any one of its prior states. So first let it be remarked that it is highly probable that what may have been the best of English once may now by some be counted as a weak, inconsequent *patois,* or dialect.

To be direct, it is the object of this article to show that dialect is not a thing to be despised in any event —that its origin is oftentimes of as royal caste as that of any speech. Listening back, from the standpoint of to-day, even to the divine singing of that old classic master to whom England's late laureate refers as

> ". . . the first warbler, whose sweet breath
> Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
> The spacious times of great Elizabeth
> With sounds that echo still";

or to whom Longfellow alludes, in his matchless sonnet, as

> ". . . the poet of the dawn, who wrote
> The Canterbury Tales, and his old age
> Made beautiful with song"—

Chaucer's verse to us is *now* as veritably dialect as to that old time it *was* the chastest English; and even then his materials were essentially dialect when his song was at best pitch. Again, our present dialect, of most plebeian ancestry, may none the less prove worthy. Mark the recognition of its own personal merit in the great new dictionary, where what was, in our own remembrance, the most outlandish dialect, is now good, sound, official English.

Since Literature must embrace all naturally existing materials—physical, mental and spiritual—we have no occasion to urge its acceptance of so-called dialect, for dialect *is* in Literature, and *has* been there since the beginning of all written thought and utterance. Strictly speaking, as well as paradoxically, all verbal expression is more or less dialectic, however grammatical. While usage establishes grammar, it no less establishes so-called dialect. Therefore we may as rightfully refer to "so-called grammar."

It is not really a question of Literature's position toward dialect that we are called upon to consider, but rather how much of Literature's valuable time shall be taken up by this dialectic country cousin. This question Literature her gracious self most

amiably answers by hugging to her breast voluminous tomes, from Chaucer on to Dickens, from Dickens on to Joel Chandler Harris. And this affectionate spirit on the part of Literature, in the main, we all most feelingly indorse.

Briefly summed, it would appear that dialect means something more than mere rude form of speech and action—that it must, in some righteous and substantial way, convey to us a positive force of soul, truth, dignity, beauty, grace, purity and sweetness that may even touch us to the tenderness of tears. Yes, dialect as certainly does all this as that speech and act refined may do it, and for the same reasons: it is simply, purely natural and human.

Yes, the Lettered and the Unlettered powers are at sword's points; and very old and bitter foemen, too, they are. As fairly as we can, then, let us look over the field of these contending forces and note their diverse positions: First, *the Lettered*—they who have the full advantages of refined education, training, and association—are undoubtedly as wholly out of order among the *Unlettered* as the Unlettered are out of order in the exalted presence of the Lettered. Each faction may in like aversion ignore or snub the other; but a long-suffering Providence must bear with the society of both. There may be one vague virtue demonstrated by this feud: each division will be found unwaveringly loyal to its kind, and mutually they desire no interchange of sympathy whatever.—Neither element will accept

from the other any *patronizing* treatment; and, perhaps, the more especially does the *Unlettered* faction reject anything in vaguest likeness of this spirit. Of the two divisions, in graphic summary,—*one* knows the very core and center of refined civilization, and this only; the *other* knows the outlying wilds and suburbs of civilization, and this only. Whose, therefore, is the greater knowledge, and whose the just right of any whit of self-glorification?

A curious thing, indeed, is this factional pride, as made equally manifest in both forces; in one, for instance, of the Unlettered forces: The average farmer, or countryman, knows, in reality, a far better and wider range of diction than he permits himself to use. He restricts and abridges the vocabulary of his speech, fundamentally, for the reason that he fears offending his rural *neighbors,* to whom a choicer speech might suggest, on his part, an assumption—a spirit of conscious superiority, and therewith an implied reflection on *their* lack of intelligence and general worthiness. If there is any one text universally known and nurtured of the Unlettered masses of our common country, it is that which reads, "All men are created equal." Therefore it is a becoming thing when true gentility prefers to overlook some variations of the class who, more from lack of cultivation than out of rude intent, sometimes almost compel a positive doubt of the nice veracity of the declaration, or at least a grief at the munificent liberality of the so-bequoted statement. The somewhat bewildering position of

these conflicting forces leaves us nothing further to consider, but how to make the most and best of the situation so far as Literature may be hurt or helped thereby.

Equally with the perfect English, then, dialect should have full justice done it. Then always it is worthy, and in Literature is thus welcome. The writer of dialect should as reverently venture in its use as in his chastest English. His effort in the *scholarly* and *elegant* direction suffers no neglect—he is *schooled* in that, perhaps, he may explain. Then let him be *schooled* in *dialect* before he sets up as an expounder of it—a teacher, forsooth a master! The real master must not only know each varying light and shade of dialect expression, but he must as minutely know the inner character of the people whose native tongue it is, else his product is simply a pretense—a wilful forgery, a rank abomination. Dialect has been and is thus insulted, vilified, and degraded, now and continually; and through this outrage solely, thousands of generous-minded readers have been turned against dialect who otherwise would have loved and blessed it in its real form of crude purity and unstrained sweetness—

Honey dripping from the comb.

Let no impious faddist, then, assume its just interpretation. He may know everything else in the world, but not dialect, nor dialectic people, for both of which he has supreme contempt, which same, be

sure, is heartily returned. Such a "superior" personage may even go among these simple country people and abide indefinitely in the midst of them, yet their more righteous contempt never for one instant permits them to be their real selves in his presence. In consequence, his most conscientious report of them, their ways, lives, and interests, is absolutely of no importance or value in the world. He never knew them, nor will he ever know them. They are not his kind of people, any more than he is their kind of man; and *their* disappointment grieves us more than his.

The master in Literature, as in any art, is that "divinely gifted man" who does just obeisance to all living creatures, "both man and beast and bird." It is this master only who, as he writes, can sweep himself aside and leave his humble characters to do the thinking and the talking. This man it is who celebrates his performance—not himself. His work he celebrates because it is not his only, but because he feels it to be the conscientious reproduction of life itself—as he has seen and known and felt it;—a representation it is of God's own script, translated and transcribed by the worshipful mind and heart and hand of genius. This virtue is impartially demanded in all art, and genius only can fully answer the demand in any art for which we claim perfection. The painter has his expression of it, with no slighting of the dialect element; so, too, the sculptor, the musician, and the list entire. In the line of Literature and literary material, an illustra-

tion of the nice meaning and distinction of the art of dialect will be found in Charles Dudley Warner's comment on George Cable's work, as far back as 1883, referring to the author's own rendition of it from the platform. Mr. Warner says:

> While the author was unfolding to his audience a life and society unfamiliar to them and entrancing them with pictures, the reality of which none doubted and the spell of which none cared to escape, it occurred to me that here was the solution of all the pother we have recently got into about the realistic and the ideal schools in fiction. In "Posson Jone," an awkward camp-meeting country preacher is the victim of a vulgar confidence game; the scenes are the street, a drinking-place, a gambling-saloon, a bull-ring, and a calaboose; there is not a "respectable" character in it. Where shall we look for a more faithful picture of low life? Where shall we find another so vividly set forth in all its sordid details? And yet see how art steps in, with the wand of genius, to make literature! Over the whole the author has cast an ideal light; over a picture that, in the hands of a bungling realist, would have been repellent he has thrown the idealizing grace that makes it one of the most charming sketches in the world. Here is nature, as nature only ought to be in literature, elevated but never departed from.

So we find dialect, as a branch of literature, worthy of the high attention and employment of the greatest master in letters—not the merest mountebank. Turn to Dickens, in innumerable passages of pathos: the death of poor Jo, or that of the "Cheap John's" little daughter in her father's arms, on the foot-board of his peddling cart before the jeering of the vulgar mob; smile moistly, too,

at Mr. Sleary's odd philosophies; or at the trials of Sissy Jupe; or lift and tower with indignation, giving ear to Stephen Blackpool and the stainless nobility of his cloyed utterances.

The crudeness or the homeliness of the dialectic element does not argue its unfitness in any way. Some readers seem to think so; but they are wrong, and very gravely wrong. Our own brief history as a nation, and our finding and founding and maintaining of it, left our forefathers little time indeed for the delicate cultivation of the arts and graces of refined and scholarly attainments. And there is little wonder, and utter blamelessness on their part, if they lapsed in point of high mental accomplishments, seeing their attention was so absorbed by propositions looking toward the protection of their rude farm-homes, their meager harvests, and their half-stabled cattle from the dread invasion of the Indian. Then, too, they had their mothers and their wives and little ones to protect, to clothe, to feed, and to die for in this awful line of duty, as hundreds upon hundreds did. These sad facts are here accented and detailed not so much for the sake of being tedious as to indicate more clearly why it was that many of the truly heroic ancestors of "our best people" grew unquestionably dialect of caste —not alone in speech, but in every mental trait and personal address. It is a grievous fact for us to confront, but many of them wore apparel of the commonest, talked loudly, and doubtless said "thisaway" and "thataway," and "Watch y' doin' of?"

and "Whur y' goin' at?"—using dialect even in their prayers to Him who, in His gentle mercy, listened and was pleased; and who listens verily unto this hour to all like prayers, yet pleased; yea, haply listens to the refined rhetorical petitions of those who are *not* pleased.

There is something more at fault than the language when we turn from or flinch at it; and, as has been intimated, the wretched fault may be skulkingly hidden away in the ambush of *ostensible* dialect—that type of dialect so copiously produced by its sole manufacturers, who, utterly stark and bare of the vaguest idea of country life or country people, at once assume that all their "gifted pens" have to do is stupidly to misspell every word; vulgarly mistreat and besloven every theme, however sacred; maim, cripple, and disfigure language never in the vocabulary of the countryman—then smuggle these monstrosities of either rhyme or prose somehow into the public print that is innocently to smear them broadcast all over the face of the country they insult.

How different the mind and method of the true intrepreter. As this phrase goes down the man himself arises—the type perfect—Colonel Richard Malcolm Johnston, who wrote "The Dukesborough Tales"—an accomplished classical scholar and teacher, yet no less an accomplished master and lover of his native dialect of middle Georgia. He, like Dickens, permits his rustic characters to think, talk, act and live, just as nature designed them. He

James Whitcomb Riley's Home on Lockerbie Street, Indianapolis

does not make the pitiable error of either patronizing or making fun of them. He knows them and he loves them; and they know and love him in return. Recalling Colonel Johnston's dialectic sketches, with his own presentation of them from the platform, the writer notes a fact that seems singularly to obtain among all true dialect-writers, namely, that they are also endowed with native histrionic capabilities: *Hear,* as well as read, Twain, Cable, Johnston, Page, Smith, and all the list with barely an exception.

Did space permit, no better illustration of true dialect sketch and characterization might here be offered than Colonel Johnston's simple story of "Mr. Absalom Billingslea," or the short and simple annals of his like quaint contemporaries, "Mr. Bill Williams" and "Mr. Jonas Lively." The scene is the country and the very little country town, with landscape, atmosphere, simplicity, circumstance—all surroundings and conditions—*veritable*—everything rural and dialectic, no less than the simple, primitive, common, wholesome-hearted men and women who so naturally live and have their blessed being in his stories, just as in the life itself. This is the manifest work of the true dialect writer and expounder. In every detail, the most minute, such work reveals the master-hand and heart of the humanitarian as well as artist—the two are indissolubly fused—and the result of such just treatment of whatever lowly themes or characters we can but love and loyally approve with all our human hearts.

Such masters necessarily are rare, and such ripe perfecting as is here attained may be in part the mellowing result of age and long observation, though it can be based upon the wisest, purest spirit of the man as well as artist.

With no less approval should the work of Joel Chandler Harris be regarded: His touch alike is ever reverential. He has gathered up the bruised and broken voices and the legends of the the slave, and from his child-heart he has affectionately yielded them to us in all their eery beauty and wild loveliness. Through them we are made to glorify the helpless and the weak and to revel in their victories. But, better, we are taught that even in barbaric breasts there dwells inherently the sense of right above wrong—equity above law—and the One Unerring Righteousness Eternal. With equal truth and strength, too, Mr. Harris has treated the dialectic elements of the interior Georgia country—the wilds and fastnesses of the "moonshiners." His tale of *Teague Poteet,* of some years ago, was contemporaneous with the list of striking mountain stories from that strong and highly gifted Tennesseean, Miss Murfree, or "Charles Egbert Craddock." In the dialectic spirit her stories charm and hold us. Always there is strangely mingled, but most naturally, the gentle nature cropping out amid the most desperate and stoical: the night scene in the isolated mountain cabin, guarded ever without and within from any chance down-swooping of the minions of the red-eyed law; the great man-group

of gentle giants, with rifles never out of arm's-reach, in tender rivalry ranged admiringly around the crowing, wakeful little boy-baby; the return, at last, of the belated mistress of the house—the sister, to whom all do great, awkward reverence. Jealously snatching up the babe and kissing it, she querulously demands why he has not long ago been put to bed. "He 'lowed he wouldn't go," is the reply.

Thomas Nelson Page, of Virginia, who wrote *Meh Lady*—a positive classic in the negro dialect: his work is veritable—strong and pure and sweet; and as an oral reader of it the doubly gifted author, in voice and cadence, natural utterance, every possible effect of speech and tone, is doubtless without rival anywhere.

Many more, indeed, than may be mentioned now there are of these real benefactors and preservers of the wayside characters, times, and customs of our ever-shifting history. Needless is it to speak here of the earlier of our workers in the dialectic line—of James Russell Lowell's New England *Hosea Biglow,* Dr. Eggleston's *Hoosier School-Master,* or the very rare and quaint, bright prattle of *Helen's Babies.* In connection with this last let us very seriously inquire what this *real* child has done that Literature should so persistently refuse to give him an abiding welcome? Since for ages this question seems to have been left unasked, it may be timely now to propound it. Why not the real child in Literature? The real child is good enough (we all

know he is bad enough) to command our admiring attention and most lively interest in real life, and just as we find him "in the raw." Then why do we deny him any righteous place of recognition in our Literature? From the immemorial advent of our dear old Mother Goose, Literature has been especially catering to the juvenile needs and desires, and yet steadfastly overlooking, all the time, the very principles upon which Nature herself founds and presents this lawless little brood of hers—the children. It is not the children who are out of order; it is Literature. And not only is Literature out of order, but she is presumptuous; she is impudent. She takes Nature's children and revises and corrects them till "their own mother doesn't know them." This is literal fact. So, very many of us are coming to inquire, as we've a right, why is the real child excluded from a just hearing in the world of letters as he has in the world of fact? For instance, what has the lovely little ragamuffin ever done of sufficient guilt to consign him eternally to the monstrous penalty of speaking most accurate grammar all the literary hours of the days of the years of his otherwise natural life?—

> "Oh, mother, may I go to school
> With brother Charles to-day?
> The air is very fine and cool;
> Oh, mother, say I may!"

—Is this a real boy that would make such a request, and is it the real language he would use? No, we

are glad to say that it is not. Simply it is a libel, in every particular, on any boy, however fondly and exactingly trained by parents however zealous for his overdecorous future. Better, indeed, the dubious sentiment of the most trivial nursery jingle, since the latter at least maintains the lawless though wholesome spirit of the child-genuine.—

> "Hink! Minx! The old witch winks—
> The fat begins to fry;
> There's nobody home but Jumping Joan,
> Father and mother and I."

Though even here the impious poet leaves the scar of grammatical knowledge upon childhood's native diction; and so the helpless little fellow is again misrepresented, and his character, to all intents and purposes, is assaulted and maligned outrageously thereby.

Now, in all seriousness, this situation ought not to be permitted to exist, though to change it seems an almost insurmountable task. The general public, very probably, is not aware of the real gravity of the position of the case as even unto this day it exists. Let the public try, then, to contribute the real child to the so-called Child Literature of its country, and have its real child returned as promptly as it dare show its little tousled head in the presence of that scholarly and dignified institution. Then ask why your real child has been spanked back home again, and the wise mentors there will virtually tell you that Child Literature wants no real

children in it, that the real child's example of defective grammar and lack of elegant deportment would furnish to its little patrician patrons suggestions very hurtful indeed to their higher morals, tendencies, and ambitions. Then, although the general public couldn't for the life of it see why or how, and might even be reminded that *it* was just such a rowdying child itself, and that its *father*—the Father of his Country—was just such a child; that Abraham Lincoln was just such a lovable, lawless child, and yet was blessed and chosen in the end for the highest service man may ever render unto man,—all—all this argument would avail not in the least, since the elegantly minded purveyors of Child Literature can not possibly tolerate the presence of any but the refined children—the very proper children—the studiously thoughtful, poetic children;— and these must be kept safe from the contaminating touch of our rough-and-tumble little fellows in "hodden gray," with frowzly heads, begrimed but laughing faces, and such awful, awful vulgarities of naturalness, and crimes of simplicity, and brazen faith and trust, and love of life and everybody in it. All other real people are getting into Literature; and without some real children along will they not soon be getting lonesome, too?

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